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THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

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September, October 2006 • *Issue #121*
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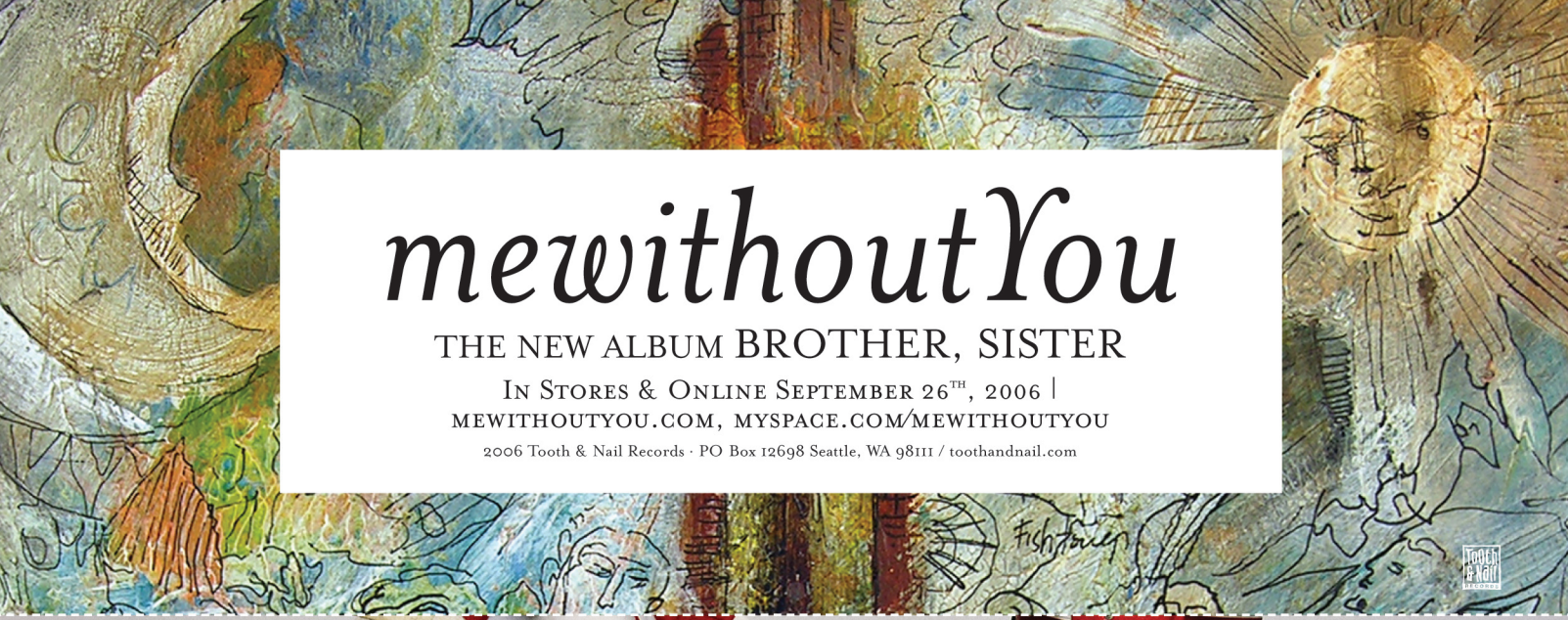

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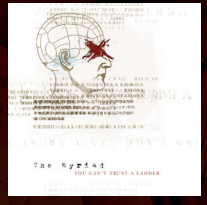

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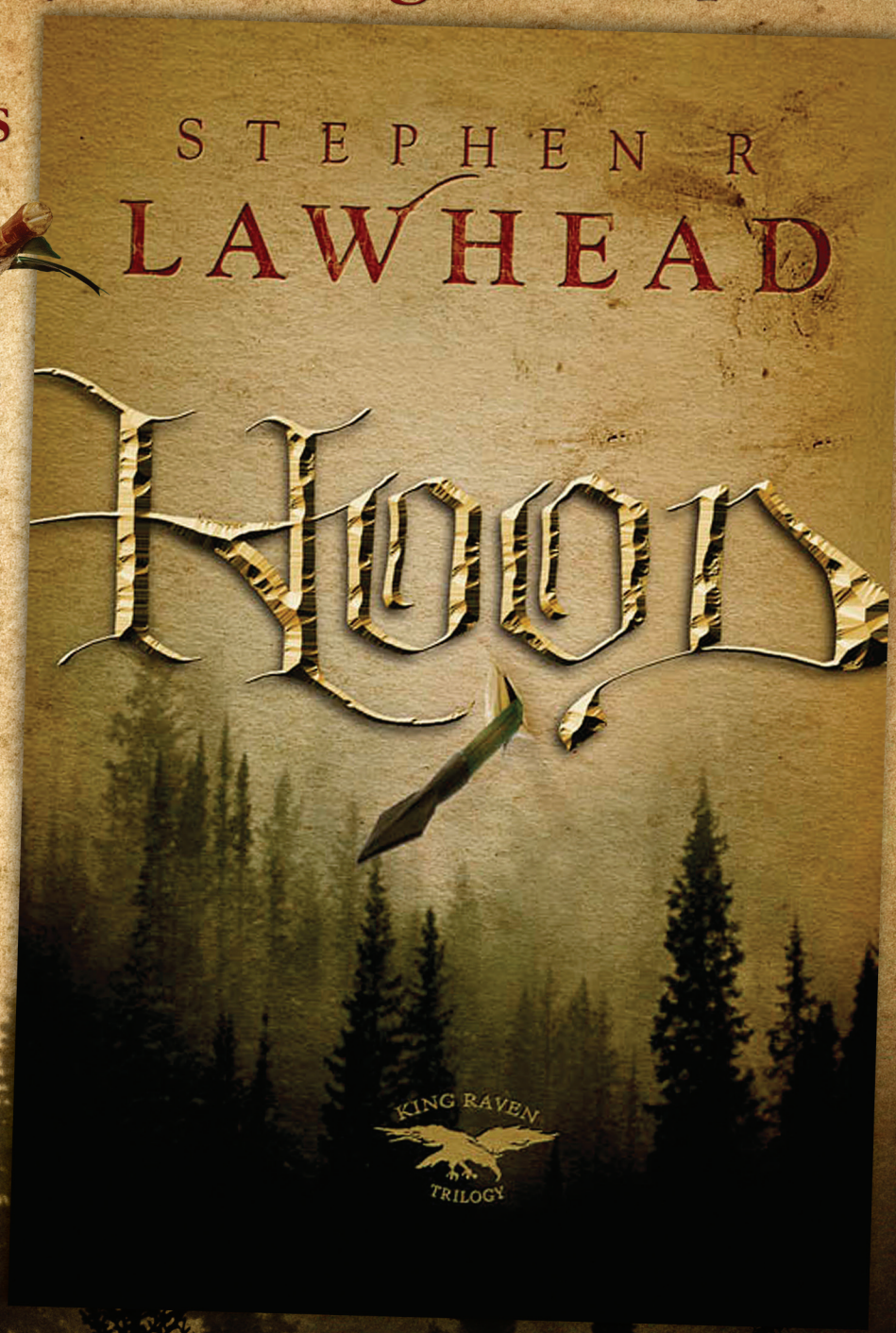

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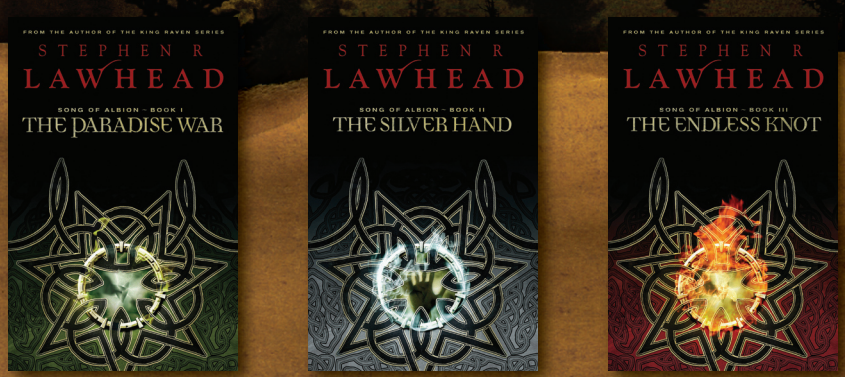
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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

WOW

Many of us (including frontwoman Ally French) had never seen a bigger moshpit in our lives. Bloodlined Calligraphy brought it hard and heavy at the Sonshine Festival. Mute Math brought the same kind of insane energy – but in an experimental way – at the Cornerstone Festival. The drummer turned a stool upside-down and set it on top of the piano, playing the metal legs with drumsticks. The bassist played a vertically mounted kick drum with a mallet. Paul Meaney lurched around, jumping on and off his piano with key-tar in hand. And the guitarist picked up his effects board and "played" it by twisting knobs, pressing pedals and coaxing out the coolest sounds – all amidst the shining encore of "Control." It was awesome hearing our ad guy, John Thompson, get up there afterwards and declare with cracked voice: "Let's thank HM Magazine for sponsoring the best show at Cornerstone Festival EVER! Mute Math rules!" Zao's Scott Mellinger, who was pacing backstage patiently getting ready for their midnight encore set, told me, "That was the best band I've seen in a long, long time." It was like we were all kids, reveling in the amazing jams. Yes, the HM Magazine stages have rocked thus far this Summer, and it was a delight to be a part of it.

We hope your Fall is filled with many such joyous experiences. We encourage you to enjoy the fun times with friends and, if your circle of friends is small – expand it! Just by being (alive and aware) you are cool and have something great to offer others in friendship. That's it! This issue is dedicated to friends – "making" and enjoying them. Now, go forth and multiply!

And I can't go without saying thanks to our super interns that we have working here this Summer – Rand and Kelly both rock, and this issue is the better for it.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

MUTE MATH	*S/T*	Has grown on my ears like moss.
DEAD POETIC	*Vices*	Reminds me of Stavesacre.
DASHBOARD CON.	*Dusk And Summer*	It took 4 listens, but I love it now.
KIM HILL	*Broken Things*	As good as cCm gets. A female D. Webb?
SHOWBREAD	*Age Of Reptiles*	Red, black, and White Stripes.
DASHBOARD CON.	*A Mark, A Mission...*	Re-discoveries are fun. Obsessions aren't.
FORGIVENESS	*Traditional Jewish...*	Prayers put to electronica. Cool chill times.

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Letters to the Edit

HOLY PODCAST, BATMAN!

God bless you brother! Your magazine and new podcast is such a blessing to me personally. Thank you so much for providing such a great resource for hard music, interviews, and time in the Word. My prayers this week will be that God brings an increase of subscribers to your podcast and that souls get saved through your awesome ministry. This podcast is definitely the beginning of something great. Thank you! Worshiping at full volume,
–Aaron Collins, Seattle, WA

Ed – Thanks for the encouragement. We are excited as well about the future of that podcast. Hey, did John J. Thompson and crew do a killer job with that, or what?!?

DASHBOARD, CONFESS!

Sorry about asking this and I know about a million people have asked you this before, but is Dashboard Confessional a Christian band? I have had some people tell me yes and some say no. So, do you know the answer? Thank you for your time. I was wondering if you knew anything about Matisyahu. I know he is Jewish, but does he cuss and stuff in his cd's? I don't know a whole lot about him. I know that he has songs like, "Lord Raise Me Up," but just because people sing about God doesn't mean that they don't cuss and sing about getting drunk and stuff. I don't get that kind of vibe from his music and stuff, but I would still like to make sure. Thanks for your time. Jesus, Love, and Hippies,
–Josh, via internet

Ed – No, I do not know. If I had to, I'd guess that Chris Carrabba is indeed a believer... As per Matisyaho, he's praising our God, Yahweh. Jews are sorta like our older brothers in the faith. I don't have any of his albums, so I can't say if he cusses or not, but I doubt it. I like him.

THAT PIECE OF PLASTIC

First off, you guys do an amazing job with the mag... it's the only thing that keeps me up to date with the music I like and music with a message. Next... what's the name of the DVD that showcases the emo/hardcore/modern punk scenes?! There is no mention of a release date and what the name of that piece of plastic viewing treasure is! Much love...
–Cody Gorel, via internet

Ed – That DVD, with Underoath and The Juliana Theory interviewed alongside Thursday and other post-hardcore bands, is called Bastards of Young (and was released on Image Ent.). Sorry for the omission.

MORTIFICATION RIPPED OFF!

Hi! I just wanted to write and let you know that I thought you printed an unworthy review of Mortification's new CD in HM. I think it's awesome. It got a good review in your Heaven's Metal mag (which is the only version I'll keep subscribing to). Tell the guy who reviewed it in HM to listen to it with about 600 watts of surround sound! It sounds awesome in my car stereo as well. Steve Rowe and company have put together a great CD. I know it's not *Scrolls...Part 2*, (but) it's not meant to be. I've had it stuck in my play list! Mortification is uncompromising metal both lyrically and musically! *Erase The Goblin* everybody!!!
–Steven Walters, via internet

Ed – While I agree that the review was off, I don't tell my reviewers what to think or what to write. This is another reason why we have both a writers' and editor's rating system – to offer multiple opinions.

WHAT SAYS H.I.M.?

I've recently gotten into the goth rock band H.I.M. (His Infernal Majesty). They're unique, while still having an accessible sound. The only thing is, they have some Satanic undertones. Their logo is a heartagram (half heart, half pentagram), and seem to have a mild obsession with 666. I was just wondering if ya'll had ever thought about doing a "So & So Says" article on them. I would love to know their views on Jesus, and just God in general. God bless!
–Taylor Murphy, Sachse, TX

Ed – That could be a great one; though I might stammer with questions like, "What's it like to be so awesome?" Or "Why'd you rip off Type O Negative?" I'd seriously like to see this interview happen. Here's hoping.

HM

EDITOR/PUBLISHER **Doug Van Pelt**
OFFICE MANAGER **Charlotta Van Pelt**
MKTG & ADS **John J. Thompson**

INTERNS **Kelly Benson, Doug Giesbrecht, Rand Renfrow**

CONTR EDITORS **Kemper Crabb, Greg Tucker, Chris Wighiman**

CONTRIBUTORS **Nate Allen, Jamie Buchanan, Joel Calahan, Chris Callaway, Matt Conner, Chris Estey, Bear Frazer, Dan Frazier, Brenten Gilbert, Kern County Kid, Dan MacIntosh, Bonnie Masri, Matt Modrich, Josh Niemyjski, Chad Olson, Austin Powell, Jamie L. Rake, Heather Reynolds, Adam Robinson, Andre Salles, Tony Shore, David Stagg, Kriss Stress, Darren Tindell Jr,**

COVER PHOTO **Ralf Strathmann**
BACK PAGE **Tim Hallila**

PROOFREADERS **Valerie Maier, Carolyn Van Pelt**

SCRIPTURE "Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back." (Isaiah 38:17)

MAILING ADDRESS PO Box 367
Hutto TX 78634

CUSTOMER SERVICE 877.897.0368
service@hmmag.com
FAX 512.535.1827

EDITORIAL dvanpelt@hmmag.com
MARKETING & ADS jjt@gyroscopearts.com
630.272.4976

SUBSCRIPTIONS U.S.A. – $15, Canada/Mexico – $20, Overseas – $25

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HM Magazine is dependently owned and operated (Psalm 62)

Printed in the U.S.

HM Magazine (ISSN 1066-6923) is published bi-monthly for $15 per year by HM, 1660 CR 424, Taylor, TX 76574. Periodicals Postage Paid at Taylor, Texas and at additional mailing office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
HM, PO Box 367, Hutto TX 78634-0367
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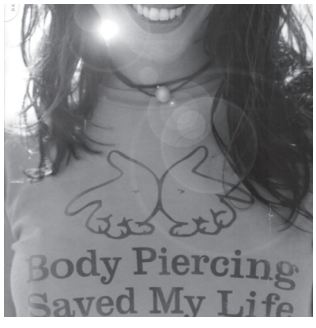
HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

CHRISTIAN ROCK GOES PRINT
BODY PIERCING SAVED MY LIFE

Senior Spin Contributor Andrew Beaujon spent the better part of 18 months researching the scene we cover from a decidedly "outsider's" perspective. Covering events like Cornerstone, GMA, and a cool Midwest conference with Danielson, Sufjan, Pedro and others (Calvin College's Festival of Faith and Music), he interviews many, observes and describes much with an unflinching matter-of-fact lens. It's kind of a fun read for an "insider." Most of it's in the positive side of things. Not everyone liked it, though. Tony Shore (obvious.typepad.com) vents: "He glossed over and misrepresented one of our scene's finest producer/artists, Aaron Sprinkle, with a couple off-handed remarks about his appearance. What's that? I was very disappointed."

WILLIAM
THE OPEN DOOR

You have probably never heard of William Goodyear, but maybe you have heard of the bands he has been a part of: Hopesfall, Between The Buried and Me, Prayer For Cleansing. Well, he has a side project simply named William. It's Goodyear's attempt at breaking away from the harder music he typically generates with the previous bands and sounds along the lines of The Evan Anthem or Further Seems Forever. Goodyear came up with this plan to create some solo stuff several years ago, and after William's first release, the side project morphed into a full band at one point, named Lobbyist. His second release, *Surface the Vessel*, which he took a more technical approach to than his other disc, should be out by now on the relatively new label Textbook Music. He is getting a backing band to tour in support of this release.



Norma Jean bucks radio on headlining tour

Norma Jean will headline *The Radio Rebellion Tour*, which also includes Between The Buried and Me, Fear Before the March of Flames, Misery Signals and revolving openers The Fully Down and The Confession. After performing all Summer on Ozzfest's second stage, NJ is set to release *Redeemer* on Sept. 12. "The tour is representing a small portion of bands who are doing something different in the music industry as a whole without having a lot or any radio play at all," says vocalist **Cory Brandan**. "The truth is, I think radio should conform to what bands like us are doing, instead of us conforming to what they're currently playing just to get on the radio. It doesn't and shouldn't work like that in music. We're making headway without their support and we're not at all against the idea of heavier bands having radio play, but this doesn't and won't change what we are doing artistically whatsoever."

News bullets

Music fans will decide the winners for the first annual MTV2 *All That Rocks* award show airing September 30th. **As I Lay Dying**, Lamb of God and Mastodon are all nominated for the category, "There Are None Higher, Ultimate Metal God," All three nominees will be interviewed before the award show on MTV2's *Headbanger's Ball*.

Family Force 5 is getting exposure on all fronts as they performed on *The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson* on July 14th; their video for "Kountry Gentleman" was featured on MTVU.com's *The Freshman Class;* and their song "Replace Me" grabbed a #1 spot on R&R's Christian Rock Chart and the Christian Radio Weekly Rock Chart.

Flicker Records signed the band **Nevertheless** and will be releasing their debut album *Live Like We're Alive* on September 19th with their first radio single, "The Real," being released for video and radio play.

The Sounds of the Underground 2 CD/DVD set features **Maylene and the Sons of Disaster**, and As I Lay Dying, alongside In Flames and others and is sold exclusively at Hot Topic.

Devin Shelton, guitarist of **Emery**, took some time off from the band's run with the *Vans Warped Tour* to get married and enjoy his honeymoon. **Ben Tietz** (formerly of **Number One Gun** and currently in **Cabrini Green**) will be taking Shelton's place during the weeks he's gone.

This December, **Bernard** will enter the studio to record a full length CD.

Sufjan Stevens is heading out on tour with My Brightest Diamond this fall. He'll have a slew of talented musicians with him as well as a small string ensemble and a brass section. This tour will be a bit more formal than the *Illinoismakers* tour, with suit coats and neckties replacing cheerleading outfits and pom-poms.

Photo: Josh Hofner

Glass Casket

BY BEAR FRAZER

During most interviews, artists like to kick back on the couch while being asked questions. For Glass Casket guitarist Dusty Waring, he opts to answer questions while burning wax out of his ears. "When you wear earplugs and you sweat, it builds up ear wax. So I have these ear candles. You just put them in your ear, you light the other end and as it burns down, it sucks everything out of your head," Dusty explains. "Afterwards, if you cut that (bleep) open, it looks like pollen. It's actually pretty gross, but pretty cool at the same time."

Apparently, this isn't the first time he has melted ear wax. He could have been doing that back while he was attending high school in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in 2003. In fact, Glass Casket signed with Abacus Recordings that same year and six months later in 2004, they released their debut album *We Are Gathered Here Today*, which moved over 15,000 units. It was a memorable moment, to say the least. "It was very emotional for everybody because Adam (lead singer) was going through something terrible when we were writing and it helped make it a more emotional record," Dusty admits. "I think it's really good for how young we were."

Two years have passed since then and now, Glass Casket has more experience under their belt and they have grown not only as a band, but as individuals. On top of that, they are always full of ideas. In fact, they have so many, it only took them three weeks to write the music for their sophomore bomb, *Desperate Man's Diary*. "*We Are Gathered Here Today* was more like heavy chaos really and *Desperate Man's Diary* is look at us now," Dusty explains. "We're a lot more mature and it's the direction we wanted to go. Me and Blake (drummer), we were saying we wanted to do the next record and make it straight metal. Even though it's more metal, I think it's a little more easier to listen to. I don't know … different strokes for different folks, but we all like it better."

Desperate Man's Diary is definitely unique. It starts out mellow with the opening track "Phenomenon," but it quickly becomes intense with "Too Scared to Live." The rest of the album is action packed with powerful screaming, loud drumming and dynamic metal guitar solos, and ironically, it ends the same way it began: calmly. However, the album is nine songs long, but they kept it that way for two reasons. "Well for one, we were kinda pressed for time and two, I mean, I just feel like that if somebody just wants to buy a record that really moves them," Dusty states, "I don't think it should be longer than 35-45 minutes because if you put out a long record, people are gonna listen to a couple of songs and cut them off."

Glass Casket just wants to make great music and take over the world. And unlike other bands, they don't care about making millions on metal and won't compromise their style for anyone. "Nowadays, music is garbage, man. People play in bands for the wrong reasons. They come out and wear makeup or play stuff they know sucks because they know people will buy it and make them huge," Dusty explains. "So you got these bands who are huge that can't even play their instruments, but the bands that are actually great musicians who actually put thought into writing and the music is good, a lot of those bands never get recognized. It's just ridiculous."

Well said, Dusty. Well said.

In late July **Underoath** canceled the rest of their headlining appearances on the *Vans Warped Tour* due to unforeseen circumstances. "We're deeply frustrated and sorry for any inconvenience this has caused. We felt it necessary to take some immediate time to focus on our friendship, as that's more important than risking it for the sake of touring at this time," the band stated. Their *Define The Great Line* album sold over 90,000 copies in its first week, taking the #2 slot on the *Billboard Top 200 Album Sales Chart* (just under Nelly Furtado).

The Nintendo Fusion Tour will be headlined by Hawthorne Heights this year. The 40 city tour will span from September 27th to November 11th and will include bands like **Relient K**, Emery, Plain White T's and The Sleeping as well as the latest toys from Nintendo.

With climbing gas prices and a deteriorating environment becoming a big problem, bands like **Inked In Blood** and **mewithoutYou** are using alternative fuels like veggie oil and grease to fuel their tour buses.

If you can't wait for the August 22nd release of **Hundred Year Storm**'s newest album, *Hello from the Children of Planet Earth*, you can pre-order it at Smart Punk. In celebration of the release, the band will have an August 20th CD release show in Austin, TX complete with a BBQ (mmm-mmm).

Bloodlined Calligraphy are currently working on their upcoming album, *Ypsilanti*, due out in October.

Switchfoot has a fever and the prescription is more cowbell. One lucky winner of the Switchfoot Cowbell Contest will be flown to LA with a friend to play the cowbell on a song for their upcoming album.

"The Show" by **Hawk Nelson** was featured on NBC during the NHL Stanley Cup Finals promotional spots.

HARDNEWS
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Destroy The Runner

BY RAND RENFROW

The band Destroy The Runner began just over two years ago. In that short time they have gone from playing their screaming infused metal at local shows in San Diego, to getting signed by Solid State Records and almost immediately recording an album. Their key to success: burritos.

"My favorite part about doing this record was eating burritos," states Kyle Setter, lead vocalist and lyricist for Destroy The Runner. Drummer Marc Kohlbry seconds this, "My favorite part was being the guy who drove to buy the burritos. Since I recorded first, I was designated the position. It was sweet."

The eating of burritos and the recording of music seems to have allowed Destroy The Runner to grow in more ways than one. "The experience as a whole has taught all of us so much," Setter claims. "We have all changed and grown significantly throughout the recording process, both as individuals and musicians. Personally, working with Steve Russell has really had a huge impact on my understanding of music." So maybe Destroy The Runner does have more secret weapons than just burritos. "Steve Russell tracked our record. Steve's an absolute guru, and has really helped us realize our vision for this record," Kohlbry says.

Needless to say, the members of Destroy The Runner had a great time recording and learned plenty about music and themselves, but with their record, entitled *Saints*, they hope to teach the listener a few things. "We really wanted to convey a sense of realness through this record, because we all make mistakes, and we all go through hard times. It's just a matter of realizing that we're not saints, we're not perfect, and then loving each other (and allowing ourselves to be loved) regardless," Kohlbry points out.

On top of that, Setter has written the very personal song "Pall Bearer," to help get this message across. "'Pall Bearer' is a song about losing someone in your life that is very close to you. I've lost friends and relatives throughout the years and when you get the phone call or someone gives you the news it seems unreal. Things like that are really tough, and sometimes raise a lot of questions about God's will. It's at times like that when we really just need to trust." Apologies are in order; it appears that the sweet Mexican food dish isn't the only thing that drives this band.

News bullets

Kids in the Way are updating their 2005 release *Apparitions of Melody*. The enhanced version will include two additional songs and a DVD with videos and behind-the-scenes footage.

Look for *The Reckoning* by **Pillar** in stores October 3rd. Produced by **Travis Wyrick** and Pillar and mixed by David Bendeth (Hawthorne Heights, As I Lay Dying, Breaking Benjamin), it carries on the Midwest's legacy of rich rock with sounds and themes inspired by Pillar's home turf. "The majority of this country is small-town America and suburban living out in the middle of nowhere," comments frontman **Rob Beckley**. "Those type of hardworking people, that's who we are, that's where we come from. And there it's all about AC/DC and Lynyrd Skynyrd."

Rocketown Records signs **The Swift**, who will be releasing their first worship CD, entitled *Singing Back to You* on October 10th.

Stavesacre's "It's Beautiful" from *How To Live With A Curse* was featured on Budweiser.com as one of their Premiere Tracks.

Stellar Kart's "Student Driver" kicked off the F1 Canadian Grand Prix on the Speed Channel this summer.

MxPx will be on tour with Streetlight Manifesto (one half Catch 22 and one half One Cool Guy), Reel Big Fish, **Transition** (whom bassist Mike Herrera produced last year) and Whole Wheat Bread beginning in July.

Los Angeles was the location for the filming of **Superchick**'s "We Live" video. The version taped was an original remix off the upcoming album *Beauty From Pain 1.1*. The band also shot a spot for women's beach volleyball with the song "It's On," which'll air on FOX Sports Network.

You can download a four song EP from **Jonezetta** for free at Absolutepunk.net.

Knockout Kings

What has your band been thru in the last year or so? Any struggle? Drama? Excitement?
Man ... actually, our band has gone through a lot in the past year – mostly changes – but I think it's for the better. It was just a little bit over a year ago that Jeff and I joined the band. There was a little bit of drama with the old guys leaving at first, but now everyone involved has decided to be mature about it. Other than that – in the past year we've gone on two tours (well, actually three if you count the one we're on right now – I'm typing this out from a public library computer in Little Rock, AR). We've had a lot of fun, grown closer, and worked really hard on this new album (*The Kid's Got Heart*). Probably the biggest struggle that's happened this year was when our old drummer, Jason Speed, decided to leave the band to pursue a ministry with the homeless in Austin, TX. It was really tough to deal with him leaving, because we were all like brothers with him, but it's so exciting to see the things he's doing with his life now. We went through a little tough period trying to find a replacement, but found a younger guy that's a super-awesome dude, and an amazing drummer. Listen to the album and you'll see that. He actually just graduated high school a week before we left for tour.

How do you feel about your new album? What songs stand out to you? Why?
We LOVE it. It's a lot different from the older stuff. We haven't necessarily taken the music in a different direction. I think we've just kind of taken what we're best at doing and channeled in on those specific things. The album is obviously quite pop-driven. It's fun when kids sing along at shows, so we wrote this album to be geared towards that. The guitar work is worlds more involved than the last record, and as I stated before, the drums are way more intricate. "All Roads Lead Home," the opening track, was originally not a favorite track of ours for the record. In fact, I wanted to scrap it. But it has slowly become pretty much all our favorite track on the record. "Snake Eyes" I like a lot, because it's the most intense track on the record. "True Blue" is the myspace single and has been a winner in all of our heads and hearts since we wrote it. We're all also really proud of the gang vocals and overall uniqueness to the closing track, "The Road Warriors."

What are your thoughts about the music happening around you? What do you hate? Why? What do you like? Why?
Oooh, this is a sensitive subject. I guess really a lot of the music we're playing shows with and being exposed to is metalcore these days. Not to speak out against metalcore bands, because we have a lot of friends that do it really well whom we love very much – we just all kind of think it's a style of music that's too easy to do very badly and is done way too much. I guess you could consider it pretty punk rock to not necessarily be down with what's popular at the moment. So one could consider us pretty punk rock for that, or the farthest thing from it, because of conforming to non-conformity. I don't know. We just like music that has heart (excuse the reference to our album title). We are very good friends with all of the guys in the Dallas hardcore scene. I realize we are a pop band, but those guys are so awesome for accepting us (we play lots of hardcore shows), because we share common musical tastes. We are by no means a hardcore band, but it's just a style of music and a community that feels like home to us. We all share different music tastes though, but there is common ground between us, and a common mindset. I think that's what makes it work.

The third installment of *Drum Nation* will be out August 15th and include audio and video tracks with **Jordan Mancino** (As I Lay Dying), alongside Chris Pennie (Dillinger Escape Plan), Michael Justian (Unearth) and Chris Adler (Lamb of God) to name a few.

Vices, **Dead Poetic**'s new album was postponed, but will now be out this Halloween.

A special edition of *The Triptych* (out October 31st) from **Demon Hunter** will feature new artwork by Dan Seagrave, four bonus tracks and a new DVD.

Retroactive Record's promotional compilation entitled *Lightning Strikes Twice, Again* (Volume 2) will feature songs from all their label's artists that are releasing albums this fall/winter. The sampler will retail for $4.99.

In Praise of Folly are on tour with their sophomore album, *Means/Ends*.

Lujo Records has several bands recording new material including **The Dark Romantics**, Baby Teeth, **Silence the Foe**, The Gena Rowlands Band, Summer Darling, Roy, **Suffering and the Hideous Thieves** and The Out Circuit.

Decyfer Down's "Life Again" hit the #1 spot on the Christian Rock Chart. This is their second #1 spot in a matter of weeks. This fall, they'll kick off the West Coast *Accelerate Tour* with bands Nevertheless, **Red** and **ZeroTheory**. Sports fans are getting an earful of Decyfer Down's "Break Free" as it's been played at NBA, MLB and NHL games. The song has been heard by 9,671,200 people through onsite and televised games.

By Autumns End signed with Hand of Hope Records.

Current 93 has a new album out, called *Black Ships Ate The Sky*. This is their first full-length album in six years.

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Enough Already!

BY JAMIE LEE RAKE

For everything else musical on which Publisher/Editor Doug trusts my tastes, but doesn't fit into this mag's usual purview, here 'tis. Enjoy!

How anyone with a heart can't love **CANDI STATON**'s wrenchingly emotive vocals baffles me. *His Hands* (Honest Jon's/Asteralwerks) is lauded as her return to deep Southern Soul after 20-plus years in Gospel. But titular track devastatingly contrasts an abusive husband to a loving Father, and her witness shines elsewhere throughout the horn-heavy retro-contempo arrangements. Overviewing Staton's sacred work, the recent *Ultimate Collection* (Shanachie) compiles 31 psalmodic tracks covering everything from invigorating blues to shimmery house.

Much as I appreciate **GARY S. PAXTON**'s '60s pop/rock production innovations and later role as cCm comedic provocateur, the sincere schmaltz marking *The Adventures Of Dr. Redempto: The Wordologist Series, Volume 1* (garyspaxton.com) begs for Rick Rubin or another genius producer to bring out the man's latent brilliance. No points for referencing Barry Hansen's funnymusic-loving radio alias (Dr. Demento) and not making me laugh; points given for Gospel boldness and sounding to have his heart invested in these songs, '80s inspirational radio production and all.

THE ALL SAVED FREAK BAND's Jesus hippie eclecticism holds up especially well. If you've not nabbed the individual reissues of ASFB's '70s-'80s longplayers, *Harps On Willows: The Best Of The All Saved Freak Band, Vol. 1* (allsavedfreakband.com) represents both the joyful innocence and apocalyptic anticipation of the Jesus movement and ASFB's wide sonic swath, serene folkiness one minute and foreboding psychedelia the next.

Making music likely to endure as well is **JONATHAN RUNDMAN**. *Protestant Rock Ethic* (love that title!) collects the Americana/power-pop/indie gadabout's contributions to Evangelical Lutheran youth events and other liturgical musings with hooks aplenty and his endearingly borderline-geeky voice in about as many styles as tracks here: 42! Arguably most surprising is an electro-pop/hip-hop spiritual endurance anthem with Minnesota rapper Agape'. (Salt Lady)

Been loving **THE PEASALL SISTERS** since their appearance in *O, Brother, Where Art Thou?* A while back though that was, aren't the three bluegrassy cuties still a mite young to be singing such dire ditties as "I Never Will Marry" on their latest, *Home To You* (Vanguard)? Thankfully, other numbers proffer more hope amid the harmonizing, and it's all mighty pretty.

Got suggestions? Believer-made music I might like? Send them! Blessings, gang.

News bullets

Cool Hand Luke is currently working on a concept album. (Kind of a nice way to go after re-uniting, huh?)

Oceans Firing will record with Steve Haigler (Muse and The Pixies) and Mike Watts (Hopesfall and As Cities Burn) in August.

Former Strike First Records band, **War of Ages**, are working on their first record for Facedown Records. The record is titled *Pride of the Wicked*.

Indelible Creative Group's newest signed band, **spur58**, will be releasing their debut album in October. The album will explore worship through personal stories and melodic rock music.

Seth Roberts, the frontman for **Watashi Wa** (aka **Eager Seas**) is now calling his band **Lakes**, and the former Bettie Rocket (and then) Tooth & Nail artist is now signed to The Militia Group. Look for an EP called *Photographs* on Sept 5th.

Look for **Demise of Eros**'s new CD *Neither Storm, Nor Quake, Nor Fire* in stores August 22nd.

Ohio band, **House of Heroes**, released *Say No More* on Mono vs. Stereo Records in May. This record was basically a re-issue of their self-titled album that gives new life to their older songs and introduces two new ones.

Echoing Angels (formerly **Two Bare Feet**) signed with INO Records.

Former **Mayfair Laundry** singer, **Kim Dexter**, is releasing a solo project this August on 7k' Records entitled, *So This Is It*.

Tracing Days debut album, *Control,* will be out September 19th.

A&M Records are releasing **Jonny Lang**'s next record, *Turn Around*, on September 19th.

Former Gate City band **This Endearing** is now with Scotoma Promotions.

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HARDNEWS
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Inhale/Exhale

BY RAND RENFROW

Everyone has probably heard of the band Relient K by now. What most people probably don't remember is bassist Brian Pitman, who played back when they were just a face in the Gotee Records crowd and during the recording of *Mmhmm*. Pitman has since left Relient K, which all of you hardcore RK fans already know. What you don't know is that Pitman is playing music again, this time in a metal band called Inhale Exhale, who recently signed to Solid State Records and just recorded their debut album.

"Haha-yeah, Inhale Exhale is probably not what some Relient K fans might expect. I have always loved heavy music. While I wouldn't trade my experience in Relient K for anything, it feels good to be doing something else that I am passionate about," Pitman claims. Brian Pitman is not the only member of Inhale Exhale who quit a previous band. Guitarist John LaRussa says he'll, "never forget the Narcissus experience." Pitman elaborates, "I first saw John play guitar in Narcissus when I was, like, 15 (almost 10 years ago). I was blown away by it, and I walked away thinking how cool it would be to start a band with him. God must have put that on my heart for a reason, because we are here now, and he is the best friend I have ever had." LaRussa goes on to explain that he was tired of just saying "what's up man" to Pitman at concerts and decided once and for all that they should do a musical project together, and then rounded out the crew with drummer Bobby Poole and vocalist Andy Levy.

While the formation of Inhale Exhale is rather simple, as four guys just dropped what they were doing and decided to pursue their passion, the way they write and create songs couldn't be more complicated. LaRussa explains, "Well, we don't write together. I record at my place and hand it over to Bobby and he records at his place, then he hands it over to Brian and then we show up to practice. Something like that. I'm weird when it comes to writing songs, though. I write a lot in my head. A couple songs Brian helped with also... I usually sit down with him and we decide if a riff will rock people's faces off or not." At least everyone in the band knows what they want.

News bullets

The 77's released a two- disc DVD in July that compiles just under three hours of live footage, videos and bonus features.

Dogwood has a new tune, "A Cause, A Plan, An Execution," available at indievision.com

Flyleaf is joining Korn, Deftones, Bury Your Dead, Deadsy, and others on the rejuvenated *Family Values Tour*.

The Alarm's latest single, "Raindown," debuted on iTunes, but a programming snafu somehow switched the download with Placebo's "Infra-red" track by mistake.

Anathallo just got signed and got a slot at Austin City Limits Festival.

The second installment of the HM Magazine Podcast should be out and ready long before this issue hits newsstands.

Early buzz is that the Atlantic/Lava label is stoked on the new **Skillet** album, and it could be chock full of hits.

The *Sounds of the Underground: Volume One* features "Memphis Will Be Laid To Waste" by Norma Jean.

Aaron Pillar of **Appleseed Cast** contributed to *Revolution On Canvas*, a collection of poetry from the indie rock scene.

Asthmatic Kitty Records released an amazing compilation, *Mews Too*, with songs by **Denison Witmer**, **Half-Handed Cloud**, **Jai Agnish**, **Danielson**, **Sufjan Stevens**, just to name a few.

Longtime Christian music group, **Audio Adrenaline** are saying goodbye with *ADIOS: The Greatest Hits*.

Amy Hammond Hagberg's first installment in a three-part book series entitled, *How Do You Know He's Real?: Celebrity Reflections on True Life Experiences With God* includes 34 interviews with everyone from **T-Bone** to (Mr. Mullet) **Billy Ray Cyrus**.

LIVE REPORT

Cornerstone Festival

BY KELLY BENSON

BUSHNELL, IL – As I drove to the Cornerstone Festival grounds on Monday morning, I wondered how the cloudy skies and sporadic rain would affect the week's events. Luckily, during my hour wait in line at the front gate, God parted those gray clouds and threw sunshine down to set the stage for the most beautiful weather Cornerstone has seen in years.

Tooth & Nail Day acted as the usual prologue to the festival with **Becoming the Archetype** attracting fans of all ages for the first of their three shows scheduled for the week. **August Burns Red** and **As Cities Burn** followed with enough energy to keep the tents packed tight. While **Hawk Nelson** attracted a younger crowd on the Encore 2 stage, Encore 1 was filled with **mewithoutYou** fans. Some of the intimacy on the smaller stage was lost when they played the mainstage later on in the week. The harsh 5:30 sun and metal barriers made for a different atmosphere, but the presence of members of **The Psalters** and a man dressed as a giant white bird that "flew" among band members made for some interesting visuals.

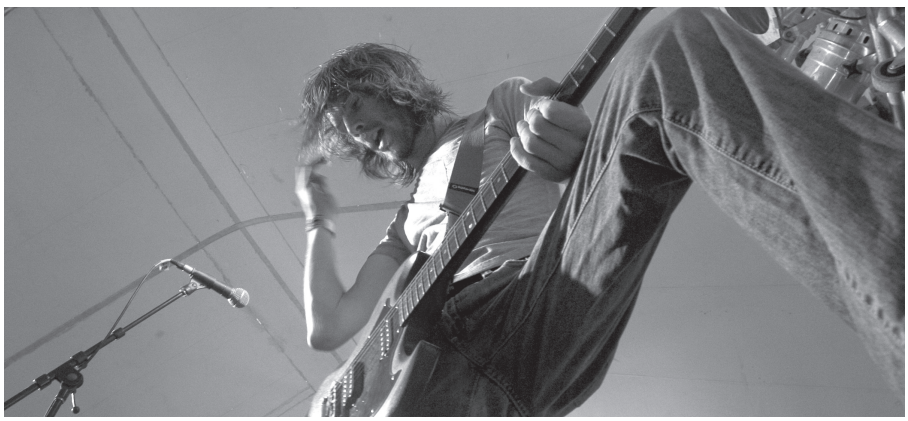
Solomon Olds of **Family Force 5** helped get the first official day of Cornerstone started by shouting, "If you're not jumping around on this next song, I'm going to count you physically ugly." That afternoon, the South rose again as **Maylene & the Sons of Disaster** played just before the anticipated mainstage lineup began. The lineup included As Cities Burn, **The Chariot**, **Norma Jean**, **As I Lay Dying** and **Underoath**. During Norma Jean's set, **Josh Scogin** joined **Cory Brandan** and **Aaron Weiss** on stage for "Memphis Will Be Laid To Rest." This site was enough to get lazy viewers wrapped around the mainstage valley to edge forward in their fold-out chairs with excitement. Underoath closed out the night and **Spencer Chamberlain** explained, "This is the most songs we've ever played at a show, and to be honest, I feel like I'm going to puke." He didn't.

Anathallo's soothing Thursday set was a nice break from the previous night's rock and **Mute Math** entertained on the HM stage with fancy drumming and a homemade instrument that **Paul Meany** graciously shared with the crowd during the closing of their set.

Friday night brought another great lineup to the main stage with **Krystal Meyers**, **MxPx** and **Relient K**. Although chick magnet **Mike Herrera** sported a haircut almost exclusively reserved for middle-aged men, MxPx proved that people still want to go to a punk rawk show.

Saturday, **Bradley Hathaway** took advantage of his time on stage to crowd surf, which quickly turned into a group of people parading him around while he exclaimed, "I'm a goddess!" **Showbread** closed out the HM Magazine stage for the week with the same intensity they brought during Tooth & Nail day with the added theatrics of a battle between two dinosaurs, which resulted in the beheading of the larger reptile. And, really, what better way to end Cornerstone than with a prehistoric beheading?

[To read the elongated version of this review, visit hmmag.com]



Photos from top: Joshua Cornutt of Maylene & the Sons of Disaster; As I Lay Dying's Tim Lambesis; mewithoutYou's Aaron Weiss; Becoming The Archetype's Alex Kenis; and Widows & Orphans' Michael Foulk. (All photos by Kelly Benson)

Metal tracks

• **Crimson Moonlight** blessed many of us with several US live appearances this Summer. They were just incredible. **I Dragon I** put on a visually stunning set at the Sanctuary Tent at Cornerstone Festival. Musically, they pretty much pick up where WP left off.

• The high quality new album from **Mortification**, *Erasing The Goblin*, has gotten even better with a Special Edition release (with new artwork) on MCM.

• The Alabaster Artist Agency announced that they will be representing **Stryper** and lead singer **Michael Sweet** for all concert appearances. The band is working on some South American dates; and Sweet will be releasing his first worship album, entitled *Him*, at press time. Of this 11-track album, Sweet says, "This is the type of album that I hope will encourage people and lead them toward worshiping God." Stryper's live concert DVD is coming out late August.

• **Kekal** is negotiating with record labels to release *The Habit of Fire*, due out later this year.

• Open Grave and Red State Records added **Feast Eternal** to their music family.

• A new album from **Jimmy Brown**, who is performing under the moniker **Jupiter VI**, is releasing soon on Retroactive Records. Titled *Back From Mars*, the tracks we've heard sound great. If you're like me, you miss this guy's music.

• **Rex Carroll** is jamming on some new songs.

• **Holy Soldier**'s *Live, Rare And Raw* DVD is now finally out on Roxx Productions.

• **Stairway** has a new album out, *The Other Side Of Midnight*.

• **X-Sinner** recently re-recorded the *Peace Treaty* album in Australia in 2004, and edited in California in 2005, with "a great mix with biting guitars" that the band had originally envisioned for this release way back in 1991. This new release is called *Fire It Up*.

• **Rex Carroll** is jamming on some new material.

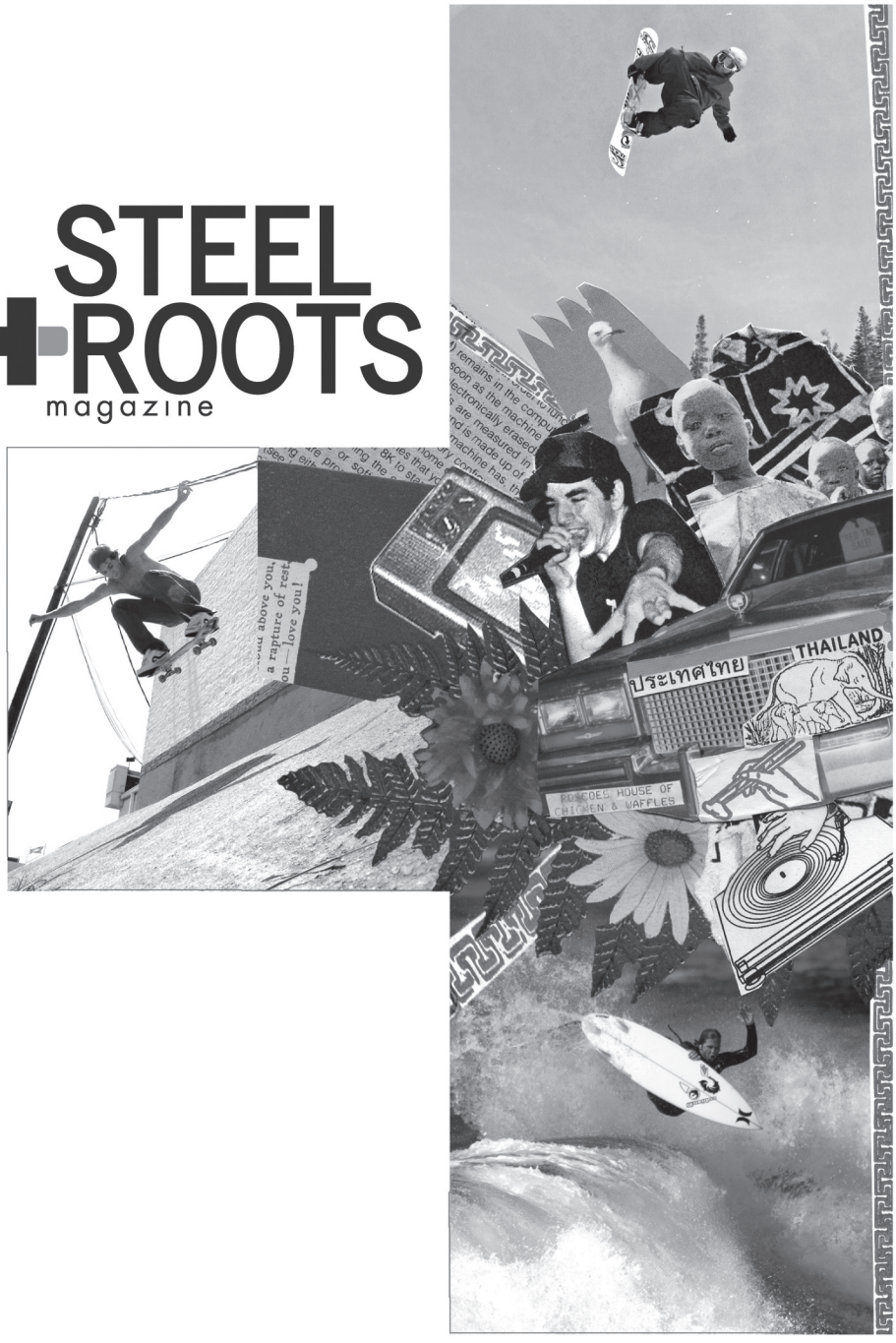
• **Broken Volume** is the new rock band with former **Sacred Warrior** members, **Bruce Swift** and **Tony Valezquez**.

• **Stryken** (who, by the way, had their name prior to 1983, prior to Stryper's renaming from Roxx Regime) have released its *First Strike* album on CD for the first time on Girder Records. Look for Stryken on the cover of the next Heaven's Metal zine.

• **Bride** re-released its self-released *This Is It* album on Retroactive Records, along with 4 bonus tracks.

• *Labour Of Love* is the title of a new hard rock benefit album that features **Liberty N Justice**, members of Journey, Richie Sambora of Bon Jovi, **Jamie Rowe**, **Crunchy**, Trixter, and many others (on 34 West Records).

STEEL ROOTS
magazine



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Classic Moments in Christian Rock history

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Evidiem. In 1991 the band One Bad Pig recorded the Johnny Cash classic, "Man In Black," and none other than Johnny Cash himself made a cameo appearance, sharing vocals for the song with lead screamer Carey Womack for the album *I Scream Sunday* (Myrrh), which has long since gone out of print.

You can hear the song today at myspace.com/onebadpig

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do it.

WITHIN

BY RAND RENFROW

Family bands are rarely, if at all, seen in the hardcore music scene. All the yelling and shouting that would ensue may be the explanation for the lack of these bands. And that is just the music. Good thing we have bands like Within to break this mold and become a role model for all those aspiring hardcore family bands. While not technically made up of an entire family, Within is comprised of the three Whitaker brothers, Casey, Chad, and Chris along with their friends Andy Goodner and Zak Willbanks, which seems like a fight ready to happen.

Describe how Within began and how you all knew each other?
Casey: Started as a youth group praise band in 2000. Started by Casey and Chad Whitaker. Over the years we have all kinda met through other bands and friends. Me and Chris and Chad have always been brothers, so that's how we met.

I noticed three of you guys have the same last name. Are you all brothers, or else how are you related?
Yes. We are bros.

Those of you who are brothers/related: are there ever arguments between you? Does this ever happen to you guys during the creative process, when you are writing songs or deciding what to do?
Oh yeah. It's pretty ridiculous, but we get over it in, like, 10 minutes and we are cool again.

So, Within just recorded a new CD. How did that go? Where did you record it? What was your favorite/least favorite part?
We recorded *The End is Near, Consider Yourself Warned* in Cleveland TN, our hometown, with a dude named Tyler Orr. It was pretty stressful, most of us were working full time and in school, so the hours sucked. We were up until, like, 6 in the morning at some times, it was very tiring. Our favorite part of the recording came when we added some chainsaw and smoked up the studio with the smell of gas and oil. It was classic.

How did you come up with the name of the new CD? What does it mean to you guys?
It wasn't really about us predicting anything or being prophets or anything like that, just more or less something we knew was going to happen. We know the end of this world is coming, we don't know when, but we are just putting the word out there.

What bands/artists influenced your sound as a band?
Probably the most influential to our sound would be the old Solid State [Records] band, Beloved. That's really who got us going.

What is the hardcore scene like in Chattanooga, TN?
What hardcore scene? Ha ha. It's in one week out the next in this city.

How did you guys get hooked up with Strike First Records? Do you enjoy it? Do they treat you well?
Jason [Dunn] randomly emailed us and we took it from there. Yeah dude, they take better care of us than our own grandparents. Seriously.

Aren't some of you guys in college/school? How do you manage to participate in Within with your school time?
It's getting a lot tougher now that we are busy with touring and promotion all the time. We have been in college and high school the last year, but this Fall we may be taking some time to just tour and see where God takes this band.

Anything else you'd like to add?
Our band is totally in it for our faith and the kids. We don't make crap as far as pay or anything. Without believing in what we are singing, our band would be nothing.

Without Him we can do nothing

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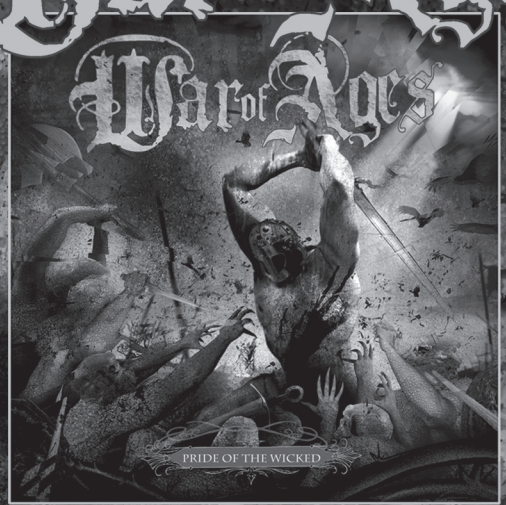

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GASOLINE HEART

BY ANDRE SALLES

Louis DeFabrizio is having a bad day.

He's calling from a cell phone near his Florida home, and the edge in his voice is audible. His inner turmoil on this sunny Monday afternoon has made him philosophical, even more so than usual, and it's especially noticeable when he turns his attention to his two favorite subjects – music and God.

Music is the main topic of the day. DeFabrizio's band, Gasoline Heart, has only been together for nine months, but they've already done more than some bands do in nine years. Their debut album, *You Know Who You Are*, is set for an August 1 release on major indie label Mono vs. Stereo. It was recorded by Steve Albini, perhaps most famous as the man behind the boards for Nirvana's *In Utero*.

Once the record hits, the band will gear up for their first-ever tour, playing with Cracker and the Elms. How did they manage this? Well, first, the members of Gasoline Heart have a long history. DeFabrizio was in pioneering emo band Dear Ephesus, and then in punky band The Kick. Drummer Jeff Irizarry is also a fellow Dear Ephesus alum, and bassist John Fortson played in Squad Five-0.

But put all that aside, because Gasoline Heart sounds like none of those bands. The new album is rootsy American pop, with a solid dose of attitude taken from bands like Pearl Jam and the Replacements. (Their name even comes from a line in a Paul Westerberg song.) It's cut through with honest emotion, and DeFabrizio says that this is the kind of music he's been trying to make all along.

"I've never played with the caliber of musicians I have now," he said. "It's honest, without being cheesy. I grew up listening to Tom Petty, the Boss, The Who. So this is a natural progression. And also, you write different when you don't think anything's going to happen."

But things are happening for the band, thanks to a push from Mono vs. Stereo. DeFabrizio laughs about the decision to sign with a smaller label.

"With The Kick, it was a major label or nothing," he chuckled. "We said no [to the smaller labels] at the same time as bands like Copeland and Anberlin were saying yes."

But one thing he says he didn't want to do was sign with a Christian label. DeFabrizio has numerous reservations about the Christian music industry, and says he wants anyone who can relate to the music of Gasoline Heart to be able to buy the record. But the most important reason not to go with a Christian label, he said, is a simple one. "The main reason is that I would never want to make one dollar because of my faith." he said. "I'm scared of that."

The songs on *You Know Who You Are* jangle as often as they rock, and they are unfailingly romantic and direct. DeFabrizio's voice is thick with emotion, like Eddie Vedder's, and he says that the songs are mostly autobiographical portraits, mainly about his five-year marriage. Above all, he hopes the honesty is apparent.

"I don't consider myself a really good songwriter," he said. "I don't have a wide vocabulary. I didn't go to college, so this is what I got."

And what of his other favorite topic of conversation? *While You Know Who You Are* isn't obviously Christian, DeFabrizio's faith is important to him, and he believes that the big questions rise above segregation. You won't hear him judging or putting people in boxes.

"Everyone doubts, everyone wonders if God exists, if they're in love. It's normal," he said. "People think and feel, and everyone has those thoughts. But God sees us completed. Sometimes you gotta keep it simple. If you believe in Christ, then you're a Christian. I don't care if you're a cokehead, you're a Christian."

Gasoline Heart is all about that kind of straightforward, no-fooling earnestness. It's apparent, even from a brief conversation, that DeFabrizio is serious and passionate about his music, and about what it means to him, and what he hopes it means to his audience. And though they've been together for less than a year, he can see the group lasting for 15 or 20.

"Hopefully we'll turn some kids onto the music that helped save our lives," he said. "Music used to be important, and now it's a fashion show. I want music to be important and sacred again. I want people to know that life is good, even when it's in the (bleep)."

gasolineheart.com

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FIREFLIGHT

BY DOUG GIESBRECHT

They say that good things come in small packages, or in the case of Florida's Fireflight, from small towns. Four of the five member group grew up in the lakeside town of Eustis, Florida. I caught up with guitarist Justin Cox in the middle of a radio press junket promoting the band's new CD, *The Healing of Harms*, and we talked about small town life. "Eustis was nice. It's one of those 'middle of nowhere' towns, but we have a lot of lakes, so some of our friends had SeaDoo's and that made it fun… but being that there wasn't a whole lot to do, there was always music to fall back on and escape into. I've been in bands since I was 15 and it was always way better to be at band practice or shows in friends' backyards than to be hanging out at the mall."

Fireflight got its start around 1999 and quickly built up a local following in the Orlando area before self-releasing their first EP, *On The Subject of Moving Forward,* in 2004. Now signed with Flicker, the group has spent a busy summer on the festival circuit promoting *The Healing of Harms*. Justin told me about the meaning behind the title: "Glenn (guitar) was reading the *Narnia* series before the movie came out and he was reading *The Silver Chair*. *The Healing of Harms* is actually the name of one of the chapters in the book. It just seemed really appropriate, because a lot of our songs are about the problems we face, and how by looking to God, we are able to overcome them. We feel that a lot of people miss out on truly experiencing God's love, because of the actions of people who try to use Christianity as a license for being critical and judgmental. These people that misuse the name of God have left much of the world scarred. I guess you could say that *The Healing of Harms* is an effort to show people who God really is."

One thing that sets Fireflight apart from the rest of the crowd is the solid vocal performance from front woman Dawn Richardson. (In addition, they also have a female bass player, Wendy Drennen; wife to guitarist Glenn. Joining them is Phee Shorb on drums). I asked if there were challenges or responsibilities to the female fans.

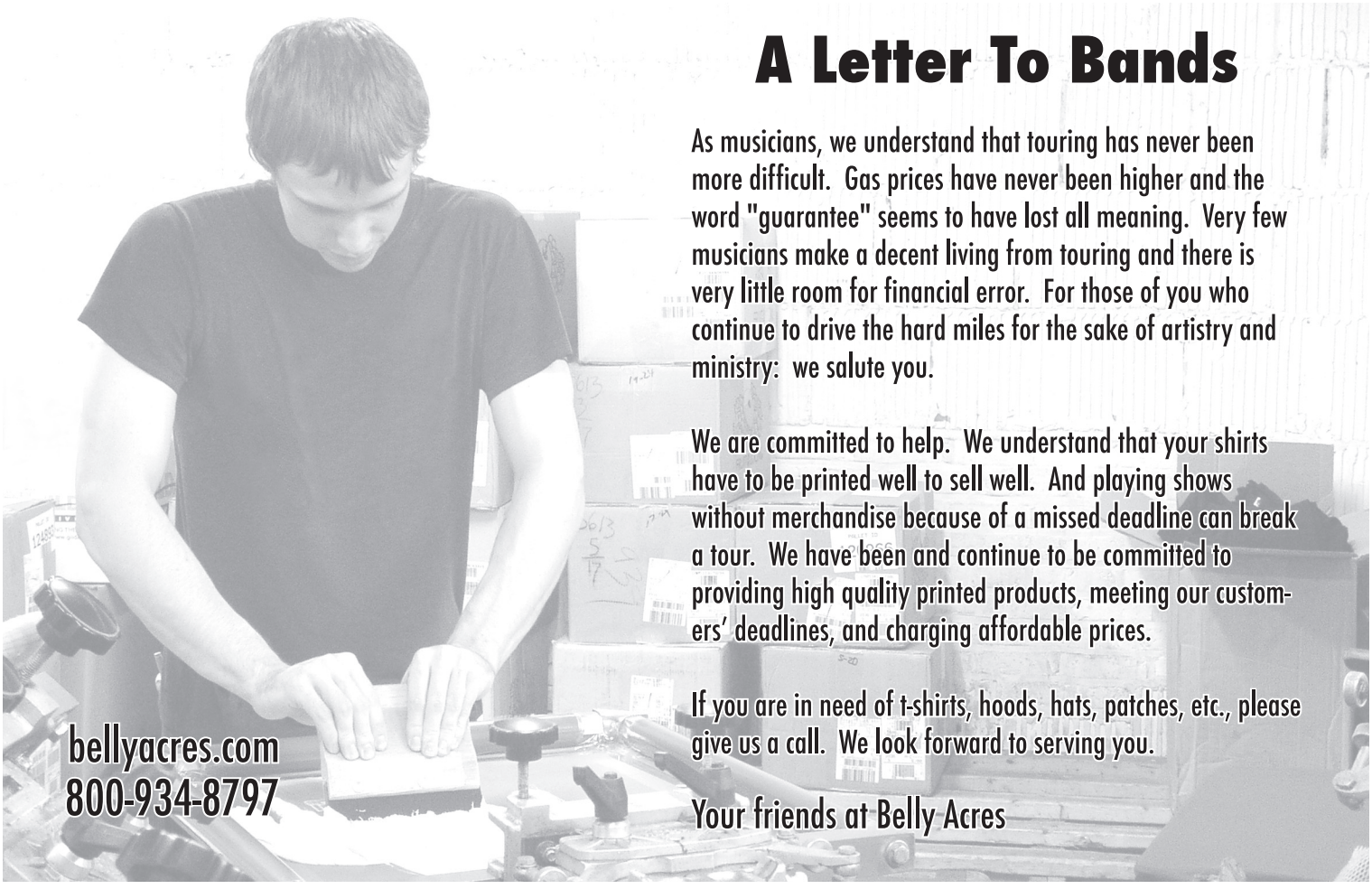
"There definitely are. Dawn really tries to encourage our fans, particularly girls, to take a step back from the whole self image thing and look at it from God's perspective. God created us in His own image, and being perfect, He doesn't make mistakes. So the whole focus of the media getting us to try and buy clothes, or makeup, or anything to make us prettier is really just a temporary out… the girls need to realize that they are perfect as they are. That goes for guys too."

Frequently compared to Evanescence, Fireflight has surprisingly varied musical influences. "I'm into 80's hair bands like Def Leppard, Poison, Skid Row and stuff like that, all the way into bands like Norma Jean, Zao, Dead Poetic, Kids in the Way, and even a little Peter Cetera. The rest of the band is pretty varied too, with bands like Dream Theater, Reba McEntire, DC Talk, etc. We're pretty diverse in that aspect, I'd say."

Finally, Justin had this advice for young bands starting out: "…to work very hard, always be writing new stuff, stay out of debt, be persistent, and don't waste money on poor quality recordings."

fireflightrock.com

Better Than The Mall



A Letter To Bands

As musicians, we understand that touring has never been more difficult. Gas prices have never been higher and the word "guarantee" seems to have lost all meaning. Very few musicians make a decent living from touring and there is very little room for financial error. For those of you who continue to drive the hard miles for the sake of artistry and ministry: we salute you.

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LAST TUESDAY

BY RAND RENFROW

Last Tuesday has undergone some major changes. They've added a fourth member, a new guitarist, which changes their line-up and consequently their sound, and all of this for a new record that shows a change in the members' feelings toward life. This shed a little light on the complications they had in the past as never being able to keep a fourth member, and now that they have one, the band could not be in a better place, musically and emotionally speaking. Now with their new record, Last Tuesday is challenging listeners of the world to change and *Become What You Believe*.

"We've been trying to hunt down a 4th member ever since we quit our lives 4 years ago, dreaming to make this a full-time endeavor," bassist and vocalist Carl Brengle states about Last Tuesday's decision to gain a new member. The band's frustrations at having a hard time keeping four members in Last Tuesday I figured were nothing compared to my frustration when vocalist and guitarist Steve Gee kept giving me super short answers to all my questions. When asked how and why they added a member, Gee replied, "We really wanted a guitarist who had different musical influences. We also wanted someone who could sing. So with that in mind, we came across Ben playing in a local faux metal Pittsburgh band, Linus, and felt he was the right man for the job."

The Ben referred to is Ben Hannigan, who had this to offer on the subject: "It was either stay at home, work a real job and/or go to college; or play guitar full-time in a punk rock band. School is for squares and money is overrated. So here I am, sweating my butt off in a van on the way to Southern Georgia, and I wouldn't have it any other way."

When I asked them what the title *Become What You Believe* meant to them individually, the question most members were prolific in answering, Gee simply offered, "To me it means that I need to stop talking and start living. It is simple and clichéd, but remains my passion." It was a heartfelt statement, but still not too informative as compared to Brengle's answer: "I've been a believer for close to 8 years now … and there are still so many areas I have yet to become. *Become What You Believe* is in-my-face. It's the daily challenge to me … to walk more, talk less. To be a man of integrity … and move away from the banter and constant thinking. *Become What You Believe* is about giving up the lusts that still consume me, about giving every breath towards my passions and convictions … it's about the cup of cool water to someone who is thirsty. I'm looking forward to another 11 months on tour for this one … singing at the top of my guts … to get my crap together."

However, my frustration was quenched by the reason Steve Gee gave for his brevity, which made plenty of sense and really struck a cord inside. "I know my answers are a little short, and for that I apologize. I just see this album holding a simple message: become what you believe. I do not want to over analyze anything about the album. The conviction is basic, and for me at this point in my life, that is what I need: simple. Our last album was all about the shortcomings of organized religion, and it made me cynical and disillusioned. That helps no one. We need something to apply; we need solutions."

lasttuesday.com

We need a Solution

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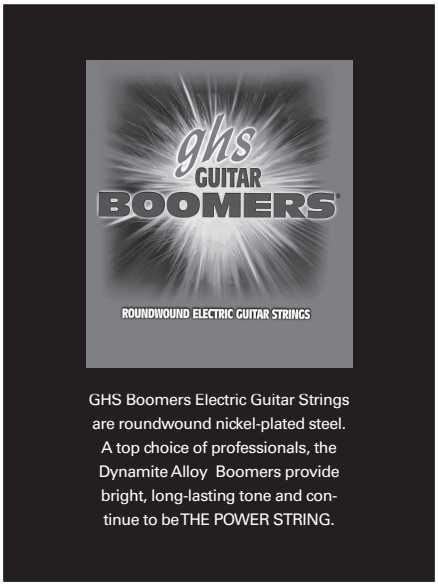

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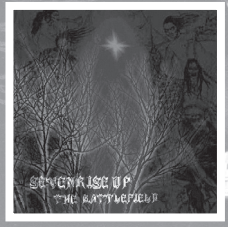

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DECEMBERADIO

BY DAN MACINTOSH

It's okay to like Southern rock again, which may seem like a strange statement to some. But for a while there it was un-cool to say you dig Lynyrd Skynyrd's duel guitar riffs and The Allman Brothers Band anthems. Of course, it also hasn't hurt that The Black Crowes came along and added a modern touch to the whole Southern rock legacy fairly recently. In fact, the Crowes' brotherly force is now back and touring together after a long hiatus. Furthermore, Drive-By Truckers and My Morning Jacket are each groups that incorporate elements of both alternative rock and Southern sounds into what they do, believe it or not.

In Christian circles, Third Day has often given its rock worship music a distinctly Southern accent. So, not coincidentally, Scott Wilbanks, Third Day's keyboardist, produced DecembeRadio's debut self-titled release. This band is not at all ashamed of its Southern rock roots, and there's also a large dosage of good old fashioned hard rock thrown into its mix as well.

"It's more like King's X, Black Crowes, riff type rock," lead guitarist and vocalist Brian Bunn explains.

This group is clearly a guitar band, and one which readily lists such classic rock staples as Aerosmith and Led Zeppelin as inspirations. But aren't these boys just a little too young to remember either of those band's heydays. How exactly did they come upon these musical relics?

"Most of those (reference points) came from our guitar teacher," guitarist and vocalist Eric Miker recalls. "We started playing the guitar when we were around the age of eleven. He got us on all these guys, like Eric Clapton and a lot of the real technical guitar players. So, that's where most of it came from. Some from our parents, but mostly from our musical mentors, like teachers and things."

If these gentlemen were taking guitar lessons at eleven, they must have known early on that music was what they ultimately wanted to do with their lives.

"Josh Reedy (lead vocalist) started playing ukulele when he was, like, two years old," says Bunn. "We knew, even at that age, that we wanted to one day be professional musicians, and that was always our goal. And we would just practice for hours and hours in our rooms." Reedy does not, however, force his ukulele skills upon the rest of the band these days.

The band came together as DecembeRadio when Bunn, Miker, and Reedy were playing together with an evangelist in Tennessee. "And through our producer, Wilbanks, he had a number of just some random drummer," Miker remembers. "So we flew him up to New Hampshire. He stepped off the plane and played three weeks' worth of dates with us, and has been with us ever since."

Historically, Southern rock bands have raised a lot of hell. But DecembeRadio is more about bringing down plenty of heaven, instead.

"What we do with music is definitely a ministry," proclaims Miker. "Some of our songs are more pointed toward someone with a Christian understanding, and lot of this album is about accountability for the way we feel Christ would have us to live. You don't necessarily have to be a Christian to form roles or morals for the lifestyle or the way you're going to live. Basically, it just sends a message, and it's a message of hope in Christ."

Miker mentions the word accountability many times during our phone interview. What exactly are the keys to being truly accountable?

"For us, it's just surrounding ourselves with speakers and pastors," explains Miker. "First, with each other, and then with more spiritually-minded, more mature-in-their-faith guys, like the speakers on the road in shows that we do or our home pastors. Just to stay grounded that way."

This mixture of Southern rock style, combined with accountably Southern spirituality, is a good one, which looks to have solid staying power.

decemberadio.com

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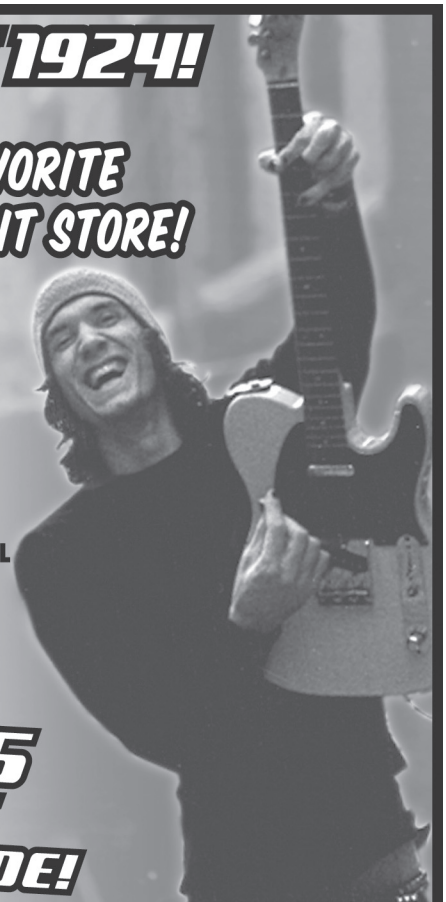

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STELLAR KART

BY MATT CONNER

The boys of Stellar Kart want you to just go ahead and forget the labels. Power-pop? Check. Punk? Check. Any way you want to go, the band simply is concerned with only one thing: making good, fun music.

Their initial release *All Gas, No Brake* was born of the stuff debut albums are made of. The audience was intended to be a youthful demographic, as the band was also younger, and the songs were full of straightforward pop/punk anthems noted by their frenetic energy. Now, the band has taken a more mature approach to their craft, delving into deeper issues lyrically without losing their youthful exuberance that brought them to this point.

We Can't Stand Sitting Down finds Stellar Kart venturing into new territory as they wrestle with ideas not found on the last release. Frontman Adam Agee explains, "The new album has more developed songs, stronger lyrics, and more versatility. People who liked our first album will definitely love it, but… this record is more mature and is a big step forward musically and lyrically."

Agee even notes that the band has adopted a different approach to the craft of songwriting. "Structurally, the lyrics on the new album are far better than the last album. We learned a lot about songwriting in the past couple years and were able to apply that in the songwriting process."

Writing thirty songs for the new album, Stellar Kart employed producer Ian Eskelin (Krystal Meyers, All-Star United) to helm the new direction. Over the course of only eight days, the entire project was recorded and finished one day before having to hit the road with Kutless.

Still, Stellar Kart is still largely made up of the formula that got them to this point. New songs like "Procrastinating" and "I'm Pretty Good" feature the signature pop-punk melodies that previous fans will recognize. The band loves to have fun, both in the studio and on the stage, and that's reflected in their music.

But the fun doesn't mean the band has been without its troubles. Agee believes God has been a provider and protector for the band since the beginning. The difficult times the band has endured to this point allowed the band to grow and realize the true perspective. "We've gone through a lot together and that only makes the relationship stronger."

"More than anything, we've learned to trust God and His plan," Agee explains. "There have been so many shaft things happen to us in our short career and most of the time we couldn't see the big picture while we were going through the hard times. As time goes by, we see the reasons we went through those times was to grow us and prepare us for the responsibility of relating to and providing hope for as many different kinds of people as possible."

For a group that got its start as an Audio Adrenaline cover band, the artists of Stellar Kart have come a long way. And while they continue to mature, the band's heart is still their youthful fans.

"Right now in our career, I believe our focus is to reach out to teens and provide them with hope, while sharing with them the issues we dealt with and are still dealing with in an effort to not have them make the same mistakes so many of us did at that age," Agee explains. "I think teenagers are searching for answers and we want to be there to show them real love."

stellarkart.com

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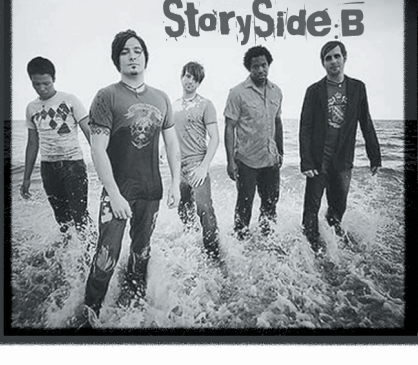

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KRYSTAL MEYERS

BY KELLY BENSON

Fans of Krystal Meyers may already know of the success she's conjured from her 2005 debut album, *Anticonformity*. With her godly rebellion, this petite powerhouse is changing the minds of today's teens as she explained what the idea of *Anticonformity* is all about, "It's not caring about the petty things of the world, but pursuing the plan and speaking out and calling the shots in your life. And going after that instead of following the kind of stuff the world has to offer that's temporary."

She seemed surprised to talk about how this rebellion is going global as her single "Anticonformity" pushed the Red Hot Chili Peppers from their #1 spot on Japan's general market radio charts. "They have been around for forever and they're really good, and I'm like, 'I'm not that good. Why am I in the number one spot?' But it's been number one for seven weeks now and it's just, it's so cool and definitely a blessing, cause overall there's not a huge population of Christians there and it's reaching so many people."

Only time will tell if Krystal's second album *Dying For A Heart*, releasing September 19th, will top another big name artist on the global charts, but she's more excited about this album than the last one. "I'm a year older and so my music has matured along with me."

When asked about the writing process for this album, she replied, "Yeah, well this time was a lot more challenging for me, because I had to write it on the road and I'd never been on the road before. It takes time and it was really stressful at first and I had writer's block after I wrote the first record and before I got on the road. I was just focusing on the road and focusing on shows so much that I kind of blocked off the writing portion of my life. It was just one of those things that I was just like, 'Alright, I'm really getting down to the wire and they want a song. Okay God, I can't do this.' I have to write His words anyway, not mine, so if He's not in it then I'm not going to be able to play it. God totally ended up pouring out and I got to write songs with my guitarist, Brian, and we both have the same musical influences; so, um, it's great. God's awesome, ya know? Again, I recorded it with the Wizard and I think this record is fresh and new like the first one was, but it's not a typical Christian music album. The guitars are a lot louder, a lot heavier. I'm just really excited about it and I think that it's a good follow-up to the first record."

Krystal explained that her musical tastes, like Spoken and Underoath, were represented better in this album than in the first one. She also dares to dig deeper into the issues that face the youth of today with her favorite song on the album, "The Situation," that she wrote with guitarist Brian Hitt. "I wrote it for my peer group and for this generation; and it's on the topic of pre-marital sex. I wanted to write something that was controversial and not, I guess, kind of diddly-dallying around like that, because I think that a lot of time it's not something that's very brought up in Christian music. And it's just, you know, letting God cure it instead of giving into the flesh."

Hearing Krystal talk, it's apparent that the idea of anticonformity carries through to *Dying For A Heart* as she continues to stand up for what she believes in. Her music and her life are a testimony to that. The future looks bright for Krystal as she allows her music to mature along with her.

krystalmeyers.com

I will not conform

L->R **Josh Kellam** [Life In Your Way], **James Atwood**
Jon Hernandez [Alove For Enemies], **Bryan Atwood**

FAVEUR CLOTHING
GRITTY APPAREL FLIES UNDER THE RADAR WITH A DEEPER MESSAGE

By Mitch Smith

On a long road trip home in 2004, James Atwood finally succumbed to what was laying heavily on his heart. The successful fiber-optics contractor had been a Christian all his life, but there was a part of him that wasn't letting Jesus take total control of his body and soul.

"That night, I pulled over to the side of the road and cried out 'Lord, if you don't take me fully, I will just keep screwing up my life!'", says James, 32, of Lexington, S.C. Immediately, the burdens of his conscience and soul disappeared, and he felt the Spirit of God lifting his own spirit. "I'm sure there were people on the road that night who thought I was a crazy man barreling down the highway, laughing and singing at the top of my lungs. I couldn't help it – I was filled! Ever since that night, life has never been the same."

getfaveur.com

After a few months and divinely-sanctioned spiritual tests, a new vision was laid on the heart of James – a Christian apparel company whose products didn't so much make statements, but made others ask questions. In 2005, James set out to start that company, Faveur, along with his wife Renea, and his brother Bryan. From the start, message and design concepts were nothing less than inspired. "I am in no way an artist, but symbolic imagery would pop in my head from nowhere. I recognized that these pictures were a way to bring Biblical concepts and truths to a present-day reality."

Indeed, Faveur's hard-and-gritty designs have a stealthy message. That's the beauty of it. One popular shirt simply stated "1+1+1=1", and to the salvation-challenged who have no concept of the Trinity, well, this shirt may spark a discussion (i.e., witnessing). The spiritual messages of Faveur run the whole gamut of Scripture: from faith, to redemption, to sacrifice, to the Rapture. Not only does Faveur produce alternative Christ-centered messages, but also features some visually gripping, hard-hitting designs, producing a product with a crossover appeal not found in mainstream Christian apparel.

Appearing at such music festivals as Cornerstone, as well as sponsoring such artists as Alove For Enemies, Life in Your Way, along with other great bands and artist, Faveur has established substantial street cred with alternative Christian music fans, and the market is responding well. The Faveur website, www.getfaveur.com, has a gallery section where people can send in photographs of themselves in Faveur apparel, and in one instance, a Faveur logo tattooed on the back of a fan's head.

Wait a minute! A tattoo? Yup! As its Manifesto states, Faveur is about acceptance, from "tattoos" to "three piece suits". As James puts it, "Faveur is just a miniscule part of the Christian reality. And like Christ says, 'All are welcome.'"

About the author – Mitch Smith is the owner and creative lead of Bright Ideas Design Group, based in Atlanta, and can be reached at mitch.smith@mac.com.

Norma Jean

I SEE DEAD PEOPLE

BY DAVID STAGG

YOU'D THINK FINDING A DEAD WOMAN IN THE SNOW WOULD BE SOME SORT OF OMEN. YOU KNOW, JUST BUY SOME SLEDS AT THE LOCAL HARDWARE STORE, HEAD UP THE CLOSEST MOUNTAIN TO HAVE SOME FUN WITH A BUDDY WHO'S HITCH-HIKED INTO TOWN, GET TO THE TOP, BASK IN THE SUNLIGHT UNDER A CLEAR, BLUE SKY—AND LOOK DOWN TO SEE AN IMMOBILE MASS FACE-DOWN IN THE POWDER. THAT NEVER ENDS WELL. IT'S THE START OF A BLOCKBUSTER MOVIE WITH A HALLOWEEN RELEASE DATE, AND WE ALL KNOW HOW THOSE END. YOU'D CALL OUT—NO RESPONSE, OF COURSE—AND AT THAT POINT, YOUR BETTER JUDGMENT DECIDES IT'S ABOUT TIME TO JUST LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE, DISAPPEAR, HAVE YOUR FUN, AND IGNORE THE SITUATION. WHO KNOWS WHAT IT COULD BE? IT'S NOT EVERY DAY YOU FIND A DEAD BODY—AND THERE'S NO WAY THAT CAN BE GOOD. ESPECIALLY NOT IN THE MIDDLE OF RECORDING YOUR THIRD, HIGHLY-ANTICIPATED RECORD.

But disappearing isn't really Norma Jean's style. They're the guys in the movie you're watching and saying to yourself, 'Don't do it. Don't do it, man' – but they do it anyway. So for Norma Jean drummer Daniel Davison and his buddy Noah, who were sledding down Mt. Shasta on a perfect day just south of the California-Oregon border on I-5, they made their way right up to the motionless entity to take care of business. Sure enough, a woman had committed suicide. There were some pill bottles and alcohol around her; her feet were brown and blue and frozen solid.

But Norma Jean are kinda used to obscure, sometimes negative things amidst their positives (though this is a first for the dead bodies part). Like when they put out their second record *O God, the Aftermath* and got criticized for its technical nature. Or like when *Bless the Martyr, Kiss the Child* started to snowball and then former lead singer Josh Scogin left the band. Like when every time there's something great, there's the yang to its yin, and something else happens that, if they let it, could drag them down. It's like that one episode of *Are You Afraid of the Dark*? where some dude found a magic claw and would wish for something but

it wouldn't come true without some obscure side-track, like winning a track meet because a rabid dog attacked the would-be winner.

"(The suicide) was a very crazy experience to have in the midst of recording a record," Davison says after telling me the story. "Definitely a big memory I'll have when looking back on the recording of this record. It really affected me for the next couple days. It didn't even seem real." So now, delve into Davison's memory bank about the recording of Norma Jean's third full-length release, and right there alongside things like working with infamous producer Ross Robinson, you'll come across "finding a dead woman in the snow."

Unlike a scary movie where the dead body would haunt them in their dreams and more than likely kill any number of people, the band isn't cursed now or anything like that. If record sales or fan following are worth any weight, Norma Jean are considered blessed. And though they may have never necessarily wished for all their success ("We never set out to make it big, just to do this the best possible way we possibly can," drummer Daniel Davison tells me), they have definitely experienced their share of obscure side-tracks alongside their successes.

"We're never going to do the same record twice," Brandan prefaces. "We're just not. And if anyone expects that of us, please don't. You're going to be let down.

But Davison and the rest of Norma Jean – singer Cory Brandan, guitarists Scottie Henry and Chris Day, and bassist Jake Schultz – welcome it all: When the new CD hits in August, these types of things – whether negative, obscure, or just plain weird – are sure to mount up. But you watch: the positives will mount up much higher. It's always been that way, and Norma Jean trust that to God. Sure, there were some complaints about their sophomore release, *O God, the Aftermath* – it was too technical, over-produced, it was too mainstream – but it definitely wasn't the over-arching opinion of the public. It was a case of those with strong opinions speaking the loudest. "For every negative thing we hear about our music, there are about ten very amazing, positive—" Brandan explains, before stopping himself.

"More than that. Maybe, like, 30 (positive) things about our records." He says this and then trails off. It's a subject the band has heard a lot about, and Brandan wants to make sure the record is straight. "The fact is that *O God* has done a lot better than *Bless the Martyr*. A lot of people don't know that. If someone's not really into what we're doing, don't listen to it. We just don't have the same taste in music, and that's OK with us. We're not trying to please everyone – or anyone. We want people to like our music, but if they don't that's OK."

And the fact is that their third-full length, *Redeemer,* will probably outsell both of their first two. It's going to be released on the heels of their stint on Ozzfest where their live performance can be showcased in their non-rotating spot. This is a very good thing; playing live is part of what makes Norma Jean Norma Jean. "As much as we do tour, it doesn't get old to play," Brandan says. "We can literally be going through anything at the time, but as soon as we step out on stage, all of that goes away."

Stepping onto the stage may be euphemistic. The band originally made it the thing to do for hard-core bands to go nuts on stage, kicking, dancing, bleeding, screaming, fans running through them to jump off the stage. That live show has morphed over the years, and since then, as the band has matured, so has their show. "It never became something like where we have to do this even if we don't feel like it," Davison says. "It's never been forced. But with things like our last record, it was a lot more technical than stuff we had done before. We had to focus on that, and at the same time, there were, like, 50 bands doing the stuff we used to do. That's OK; that's what music's about, inspiring other people, and being inspired and creating your own thing from that. We weren't the first band by any means to do that. But the more we grew up, the more we wanted to focus on playing the songs as best we can, and still feel it."

The live show is still like therapy for the band, a place they've been going almost daily for years, a place they trust. But recently, the recording of *Redeemer* has been extremely therapeutic – especially the way producer Ross Robinson (who's put up monumental records for Korn, Limp Bizkit, Slipknot, The Cure, At the Drive-In) treated the recording experience.

"(Robinson) totally likes to isolate the band and make sure there are no distractions, far away from anything familiar," Davison says. "The way (the studio) was set up, basically like a club theater, and the seats are still there. We had a drum kit set up on the stage, facing out like we were going to play a show, but then we had the amps all circled around, facing the drums … So before we would record a song, we would go up on stage and there'd be the band and Ross, and we would talk about the song, what it meant to us, what the lyrics were about, what the lyrics meant to us spiritually, what certain lines meant, and how it related to each of our lives."

Brandan continues: "As soon as we were done—at the peak of everyone spilling their guts out about what we felt about that song – we would jump on our instruments and track it four times straight in a row. It was all of us at the same time and all we were really focusing on was recording drums, but we all played together anyway, and we did that throughout the entire recording process. That energy really comes through."

* * *

You remember when you broke your arm in junior high? You remember how it was pretty cool for, like, the first week? Then everyone asked you what happened? Then you got real tired of answering the question? Found yourself reverting to a completely prepared speech? And then when that got boring, you started making stuff up? That's kind of how Brandan feels now. Go ahead and ask him how it was that he ended up taking former singer Josh Scogin's (now of The Chariot) spot as front man, and his response is probably different for every person.

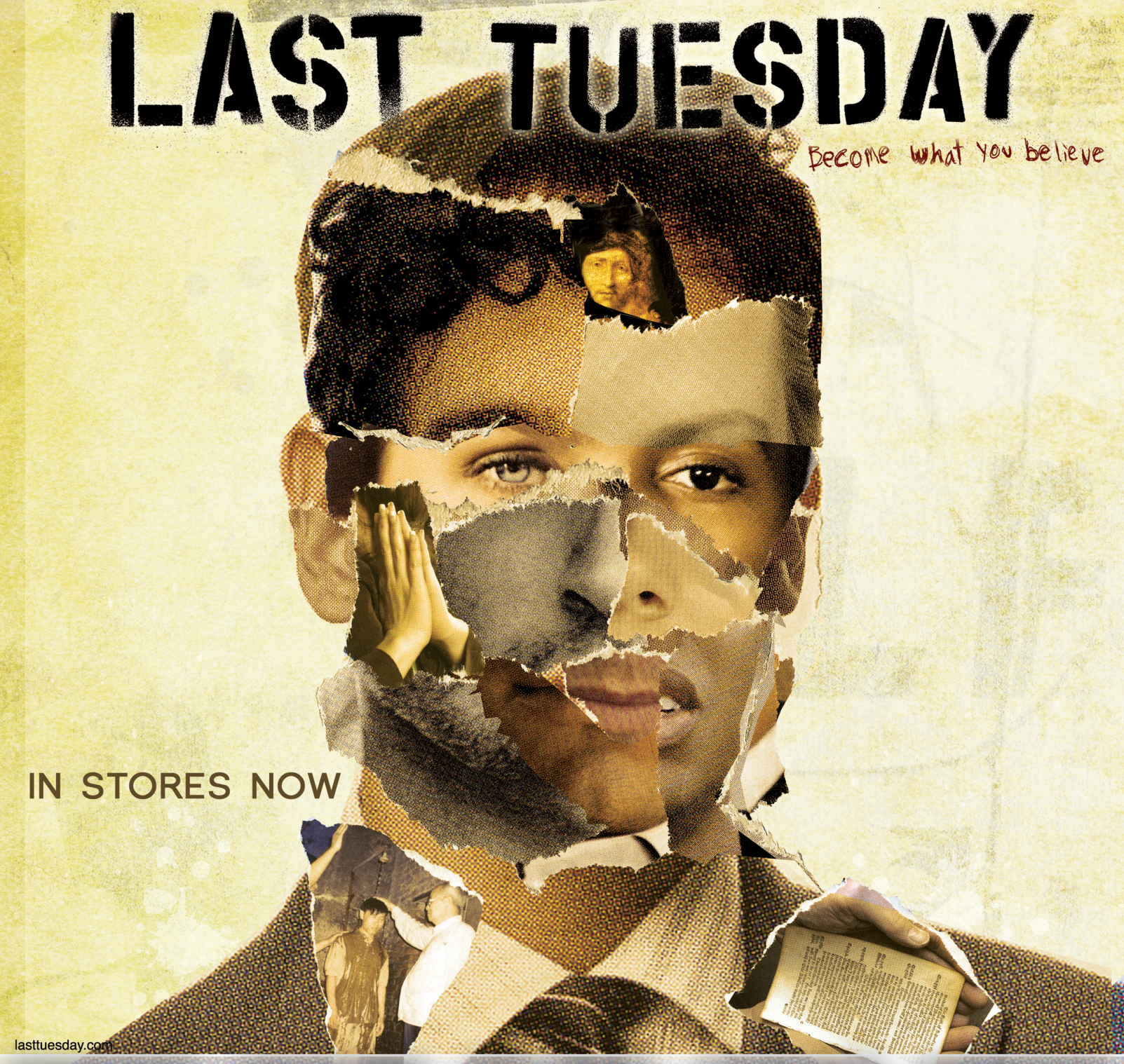
But I have to ask; I can't assume or use whatever I read about it. So I get it from Brandan, too. "This is a story that gets told many, many times," he starts off, like he's about to tell me some fairy tale. "I actually—" and at that moment, a motorcycle drives by; I can hear it in the background. "We're all robots," he comes up with, "and I was programmed from day one to be in this band…" I start to laugh a little. "What's funny?" he asks. That there was a motorcycle driving by right when you said that you were a robot, I say.

"Yeah, I know," he responds, but can barely get it out – he's laughing, I'm laughing – because the whole conversation has become pretty hilarious. I told him I'd buy it because, for all I know, maybe that wasn't a motorcycle driving by, but his mechanical head turning 180 degrees or something. But then he continues: "Yeah, I was programmed, and then I had the whole year 2000 scare and that's when I was programmed to be in Norma Jean."

He was actually really good friends with the band – they would stay with him when they were on tour, among other things – and when Scogin left, they used him as a replacement singer for a tour through Europe. Halfway through – somewhere in

LAST TUESDAY

Become what you believe



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Scotland, he thinks – they sat him down on the bus and asked him if he wanted to do it full-time. He, of course, said OK.

At that point, Norma Jean was already making waves. *Bless the Martyr* was doing well, they were becoming somewhat renowned for their out-of-control live shows, selling out small clubs and venues, and at that time, with their sophomore full-length on the horizon, the pressure started to mount; it didn't help it had been almost two years since their first record as Norma Jean was released. In response, the entire band then said the same thing about what would become their second LP: If you're expecting to hear *Bless the Martyr* again, you need to look elsewhere.

Sure enough, *O God, the Aftermath* was a departure from *Bless the Martyr*, but not wholly. It was about 50 percent what people were expecting and 50 percent new school. It grabbed some new fans, some old fans dug it, it ticked some off … But above all else, it did sell. Their fan base rose. They had music videos on MTV and MTV2. And now, when the idea of having a video on MTV seemed so far-fetched, the network almost wait for their next installment.

"I was just lying around in my living room and I saw (*Face : Face*) come on," Davison says, recalling the first time he saw himself on MTV. "I didn't even know it was going to come on or anything. That was probably back in 2002, maybe 2003. It's still crazy. I'm always stoked, but now it's like, 'Yeah, we're going to make a video and it will get on TV.' And then when I think about that, I'm like, 'Dude, that's insane! They wait for another one!'"

And that's how it's going to be for *Redeemer*, as well, a record I'm told you should think of as one-third *Bless the Martyr*, one-third *O God, the Aftermath*, and one-third something you've never heard before. "We're never going to do the same record twice," Brandan prefaces. "We're just not. And if anyone expects that of us, please don't. You're going to be let down. I think we proved that with *O God*. It was still a heavy, crazy, brutal record, but it was way more technical and on a completely different page. We've pretty much done the same thing here. We've experimented with a lot of things we've never done before."

Davison agrees. "This record is totally different than both the last two records," he says. "I think that anybody who has liked the last two records will love this record, but so many other people will, too, because it goes in so many different directions."

The record is going to sell, but people are people and will always find something to complain about. The band will face the negative criticism like they always do, but ideally, those positives will obliterate them. Whether they do or not, Norma Jean are still thankful for everything they've been given, even if it's just the opportunity to put out a third CD – or if it's thanking God the third CD went platinum. "We constantly remind ourselves about what we've done," Brandan says. "It's really just we give all the glory to God on that. We do what we love, but we do it because of that reason. Really, it's all because of Him."

✖

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LIVING WITHOUT FEAR

BY DOUG VAN PELT

AARON WEISS MADE ME A PEANUT BUTTER & JELLY SANDWICH AT THE END OF OUR INTERVIEW. WE WERE AT THE ANNUAL CORNERSTONE FESTIVAL, WHICH IS ALWAYS A TRICKY PLACE TO TRY AND SCHEDULE ANY PRESS BUSINESS, WITH MULTIPLE STAGES AND EVENTS VYING FOR EVERYONE'S ATTENTION. AARON AND I FINALLY HOOKED UP ON THE THIRD DAY OF MUSIC. I WAS BETWEEN SETS AT THE HM MAGAZINE STAGE AND I SPOTTED HIM OUTSIDE HIS BIO-DIESEL TOUR BUS.

While discussing a good time to interview, Aaron suggested a half-hour later, as his window for foraging food from festival trash was closing with the onset of nightfall. I silently hoped that the ingredients for my sandwich weren't found in a rotting trash barrel, but I wasn't about to refuse his generous and hospitable offer. If I got sick, I figured, I'd gladly "take one for the team" if it meant a good interview – and any interview with the frontman for mewithoutYou was almost guaranteed to be a good read, as the guy dripped with charisma like the wild facial hair jetting from his chin.

If I got sick from the sandwich and the interview turned out bad, I'd be really bummed, as I was forsaking what had to be a killer set by Bernard at the stage that bore my magazine's name. After introducing the band and taking in the first two songs from the audience side (so as to experience the full audio-visual experience the band brings with its projected moving images), I then headed over to the bus looking for Aaron. After determining that the bunk area would be too loud due to the bleed-over from both nearby Encore Tents, we headed outdoors for as quiet an interview as the night air at a festival in full-tilt provided. I instructed the singer on where to hold the digital recorder with built-in condenser mic and hoped for the best.

It had been only a couple hours after the band had played an opening mainstage slot before Copeland, Anberlin, and the David Crowder Band. Some observers I'd asked preferred their brief set the previous Tuesday on "Tooth & Nail Day," but Weiss was enthusiastic about what had just gone down. "It was probably one of the most fun nights I've had with the band. It was one of my favorite shows we've ever played. It was really magical for me. Much better than our first show." So much for perspective.

The band has just finished their third Tooth & Nail release, *Brother, Sister*. It's a slight progression from *Catch For Us The Foxes*, but only about as much as they progressed from it and *[A>B]:Life*. The sonics are impeccable. When they're playing a jazz-like yet simple beat, it's precise and clean. When they rock, they come as a force, like seasoned veterans. The band is growing, but not at a pace that'll outrun its fanbase.

This musical growth and progression brought out the brightest eyed and most animated responses about the new album. He described his favorite moments as the very ones where the band "departed the most from our sound on the new album. There's more shouting and more electric guitars. Some of the newer songs, there's acoustic guitars … and I took voice lessons to learn to pace a little better than I could before. I started taking it to the kind of music that I enjoy listening to. So, there's a few tracks that departed pretty drastically from what people may be accustomed to. There's quite a few, also, that stay in the very same beat as what you always expect. We've moved forward, but haven't wandered too far. I think some of the new sounds that we recorded are my favorite recordings. I tried bass. We had different friends from Psalters and Anathallo... People came together and working with them was just completely incredible. It provides so much more color and texture. Other people's creativity… It's really spontaneous. We didn't tell anybody what to play. Some of the Anathallo guys – they recorded their tracks after we'd left; so we didn't even know what they were going to do. It was a little more free."

I was most curious about the thrice-repeated spider theme found on the album. The people I described the multi-colored spider motif to usually laughed and wondered out loud if the band was experimenting with LSD and gazing at spider webs. Weiss chuckled when I brought its inspiration up.

"Just like most of our writing, it's something I saw. I'm not that creative of a person, so I don't make things up out of thin air. I was just on tour last year and saw a brown spider on a brown leaf and it occurred to me how God cares for all of creation and how perfectly everything works. So, I took it as a progression from a healthier yellow leaf, to getting older to orange, and then brittle and brown, and falling off and dying. One of my realizations in that is that I die and everybody dies. So, it kind of has an unhappy twist at the end, but ultimately, there's more hope and positive encouragement on the new record. But yeah, it's about a spider I saw."

As much as the music draws listeners towards the mewithoutYou stage, it's the indefinable qualities about its animated frontman, that man with the penchant for sashaying and serpent-twining his spine more serendipitously than an Axel Rose or a belly dancer. But it's not just his physical appearance or mannerisms. It's those words… That sharing from the stage, that bursting with honesty that seems to soar fearlessly towards that awkward barrier of pretension that most of us live in.

On this album the band's penman was about as freewheeling as the guest musicians who contributed to the sounds. "I had a lot less anxiety in my heart about, 'What am I going to say?' But, recording the first record, I didn't care what I was saying for the most part. I just wanted to be cool and make out with girls. With the second record, I had an experience where I encountered Jesus in such an undeniable way that I knew I couldn't

continued on page 60

Photo: Chris Crisman

Showbread

A THEME'S A THEME

BY RAND RENFROW

I HAVE IT. I HAVE THE FORMULA FOR WRITING A SHOWBREAD SONG, STRAIGHT FROM THE MOUTH OF VOCALIST AND LYRICIST JOSH DIES HIMSELF:

A: Listen to some 90s band.
B: I copy it.
C: I play it for the band on the acoustic guitar after continually playing old songs to psyche them into thinking I haven't written anything at all.
D: Several people nod, Matt (guitarist) complains that the song sucks.
E: We play it together, several people comment as to how much we rule as a band.
F: Matt makes a solo and decides he likes the song after all.
G: Patrick (bassist) points out the song needs a punk beat.
H: Matt argues that it needs harmonies.
I: I zone out.
J: A fight ensues.
K: Everyone hugs after it is realized that we cannot fight, because it's too hot or cold outside in the garage.
I: Reconciliations are offered over sweet tea.

First, thoughts of riches and stardom come to mind now that I have the steps to writing. Yet, after reading this, becoming wealthy seems to be a high and lofty goal, since Showbread has failed to achieve both stardom and acquisition of riches with this system. Plus, I don't know if I can trust Josh Dies. While he tells me that for the new Showbread album he just ripped off popular 90s bands like Nine Inch Nails, Weezer, and Nirvana, guitarist Matt Davis starts off by reassuring me that they had no preconceived notions for the new CD and they weren't about to recreate what they did last record. "I don't think we went into the record with any specific ideas. We just wrote what we liked. We wanted to make a more straightforward rock record, but definitely still Showbread. You don't ever want to make the same record twice and we definitely didn't do that." Regardless of which formula was used, or if it was a combination, or if there really were fights and sweet tea, Showbread certainly has made a new record that shows their maturity, both sonically and lyrically. Even though they have expanded on their sound, Showbread still used the same crew as last record, made up of producer Sylvia Shivy and her sidekick, co-producer and mixer Rich Veltrop. "They were the ones who produced our first record and we felt they were just really on our same page as far as catching on our ideas and running with them," Davis explains. Having producers and engineers on the same page as Showbread allowed the band more creative space, not to mention the six weeks they were allowed to record instead of the three weeks they had for their previous record, *No Sir, Nihilism Is Not Practical*. All of this has climaxed into the beautifully crafted *Age of Reptiles*.

Reptiles are not the most lovable creatures. Kids don't run to pet shop windows and stare at the cute crocodiles, begging parents to get one. Rarely does someone impulsively reach down to pet a snake's shimmering skin. There are alligators, crocodiles, snakes, lizards, and turtles, among many species that differ from each other. They are slimy, scaly, smelly, poisonous, filled with teeth, equipped with claws, and all seem to be disgruntled. From this description, reptiles are starting to sound a bit like mankind, which is probably what Showbread saw when they drew the same comparison.

"That was Josh's idea," guitarist Matt Davis says of the title track on Showbread's new album, *Age of Reptiles*, equating reptiles to humanity. "He's a lizard, he was just talking about his pals." Since it was vocalist and lyricist Josh Dies' idea, he commented, "I thought of the name of the album first, then decided how applicable it could be as a metaphor for humanity today, the cold bloodedness being the connection between reptiles and humans." With a CD title like that and song names such as, "Pachycephalosaurus," "The Jesus Lizard," and "Dinosaur Bones," it is rather easy to notice that this theme runs throughout the entire ten songs on the new album. Fears may spring to mind of whether or not the usual dose of Showbread weirdness and wit will be present on an album devoted to reptiles. Well, unless you know what emetophobia or a Pachycephalosaurus is, the satire will be a little harder to notice on *Age of Reptiles*. Emetophobia is the irrational fear of vomiting, a rather common phobia, complete with its own online support groups, and Davis assures everyone that blowing chunks is "mentioned in pretty much every song." As if that isn't enough of the standard Showbread, Josh Dies continues, "There are a handful of love songs. There is a tribute to George A. Romero's *Living Dead* quadrilogy in the song 'George Romero Will Be At Our Wedding.' It's actually a love song that takes place within the four movies. There are a few angry songs, like 'Centipede Sisters' and 'Pachycephalosaurus' that kind of utilize the cruel, finger-pointing satire that is more typical of Showbread lyrics. The song about the shallow attention starved girls is called 'Pachycephalosaurus,' which is a dinosaur with a thick skull that they use to ram into one another to settle mating and territorial disputes."

These explanations and lyrics are pretty ingenious for a fellow who can just as easily get immersed in an old school zombie movie. I take that back, zombie movies are probably what facilitate Josh Dies in writing crazy lyrics that can also drive home important messages, digging deep into even the most leathered skinned humans. Dies says that the references to vomit in every song serve "as a reminder of the disgust in reaction to the issues brought up." Don't take it the wrong way, though; Showbread isn't trying to be too profound. Matt Davis tells me, "We try to just put on the best show we can and take kids to a place that's not too serious and fun. People are too serious about music and everything these days. Have fun. It's music." With stories about being abducted by aliens, people turning into lizards, running out of hot sauce, and performing in venues filled with mirrors that make you see yourself getting crunk and that in turn making you sick, it was easy for me to discern that having fun is definitely one of Showbread's passions.

I say "one of," because Showbread's other, more important, passion is the one that influenced the reptile-to-humanity metaphor, and is just as easily perceived along the course of the album, not by the song titles, but by the lyrics. Amidst the reptilian and retching symbols, are lyrics that show the insides of Dies' heart, most evident at the end of the ten-minute long title track, "Age of Reptiles," where Josh covers the first verse of the song "I Love You, Lord." "I feel God has called me to be in this band, that's why I'm in [it]," Dies states. Matt Davis expands, "We play music because we love it and we feel like God's given us this outlet or this platform to show kids love and to just have a good time and hopefully they'll see Christ. That's exciting to us. It's why we do everything we do."

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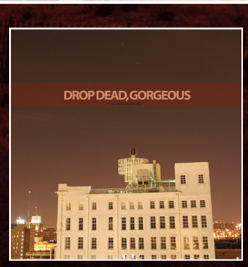

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PIGEON JOHN

BY BRENTEN GILBERT

"Hip-hop is supposed to be dangerous. I would hate doing safe music."

Over the past decade, Pigeon John has been working his way through the ranks of underground hip-hop, touring heavily and honing his craft, making a name for himself along the way. A member of Brainwash Projects in the mid-to-late 90s and later LA Symphony, Pigeon John first spread his wings as a solo artist in 2001. Pressing his debut, *Pigeon John is Clueless*, independently, he quickly became a highly sought after guest vocalist and the story had begun.

"Welcome to the Show"…

Now signed to Quannum Projects, a small young label based out of San Francisco and home to underground hip-hop acts such as Blackalicious, the next leg of the journey is about to kick off. With a new album set to release in September, Pigeon John looks forward to having a CD that's easy to find in stores.

And though this latest album, *Pigeon John and the Summertime Pool Party*, is releasing after Summer is officially over, Pigeon John insists that the record, which was inspired by the Beach Boys, is still a timely release. "It's something to remember the Summer," he states. "I wanted an album that just puts you in a good mood when you push play." Indeed, two key themes of the album are that of fond remembrance and having a good time.

"There's a song called "The Last Sunshine," which is a bomb way to describe the sunset, taken from *The Great Gatsby*," says Pigeon John. "I made that song about things that you miss, like the last glimpse of your youth or an old relationship." The opening track welcomes listeners to an album that offers an escape from the clutches of reality, noting, "I know you've got bills to pay, but it's my job to help you let it wash away."

The End of the World "As We Know It"

Inspired heavily by reading the works of authors such as Jack Kerouac and Douglas Coupland, Pigeon John has gotten quite good at crafting fictional scenarios that grip listeners with a stunning sense of realism. *Summertime Pool Party* features its share of these songs as well. One such track is titled, "As We Know It," and finds Pigeon John imagining: "Jesus coming back [to earth] literally, to see the emotions that the world would have towards God."

"It would be a momentous occasion for most," says Pigeon John, "but for others [it's an opportunity] to ask the questions and express the anger we have for God." Expressing these emotions in the "rawest" form possible, the first two verses of the song serve up some of the tough questions for which we don't have answers. "Everybody has those questions," explains Pigeon John, "but the answer is usually something like, 'I don't know, but once you die, you'll find out.'"

Though he initially planned to leave the tension completely unresolved, Pigeon John was later persuaded to add a third verse to give the song somewhat of a softer tone. "What came most naturally was a communion between God and man," he adds, noting that such communion "is going to be very bittersweet."

Sometimes I Feel the "Weight of the World"…

While "As We Know It" seems to be targeted to a churched audience, a large part of Pigeon John's career and attention is focused elsewhere. Says Pigeon John, "being ourselves and participating in the culture around us is one of the most important aspects of life." This may be part of why he frequently tours with secular acts and often performs in bars across the country. "Every day for six months, I'm in a bar. That's like my nine-to-five," continues Pigeon John. "Just being in a bar, hanging out, and meeting people."

It puts him in a unique position of influence, offering great opportunities to spread his message beyond the walls of the Christian community, but it also presents a number of challenges. "It does wear on me," he admits. "Touring is built for constant partying and it's hard to separate yourself to find time to reflect, read, pray, or have any quiet time because you're just surrounded." Noting the difficulties, Pigeon John adds, "that's been the biggest weight [in my life], but it's getting better. I'm learning."

"One for the…" Church?

Another part of why Pigeon John can be found playing bars more often than churches may be his tendency to be a bit risky. One of the most common complaints about his music is that of the language found in some of the songs. He explains, "that's the way it came out, so I try to keep it as raw as possible." Though he understands the complaints from parents and church leaders and realizes his need to be "more responsible," Pigeon John does wish that "the church would incorporate more danger or risk in their scene."

"[Churches] should let people live and let a lot more mistakes happen," he says. "Then people will need to lean on God's grace instead of the perfection of man." This risk-taking attitude is necessary if the church will ever accept hip-hop. Until then, there are no hard feelings. "I love the church," states Pigeon John. "I can't blame them, because they're looking out for their young." They're looking for something "safe." Something Pigeon John is obviously not.

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Photo by: Verity Smith

BEATS

[**hip-hop** news 'n' reviews by SphereofHipHop. com]

News shorts…

Sundance is currently working with mainstream hip-hop legend MC Serch, of the 3rd Bass crew, on some new music. Look also for Sundance's production on TV networks like MTV, MTV2, VH1, AE, Discovery, E!, ABC Kids, CBS, Food Network and others. (Myspace.com/SoundDisciple)

Sintax the Terrific is finished with his follow-up to the much-revered *Simple Moves*. This **Deepspace5** member shines once again with his unique brand of witty lyrical wordplay. *Curb Appeal* is set for a fall 2006 release.

Looking for one of the best gospel hip-hop events of the year? Look no further… Fla. vor Fest 2006 is on the map; it runs from Nov. 2-5! They are experiencing record levels of registrations from all over the USA. This event is essential for any hip-hop artist and fan. (FlavorAlliance.com)

Tampa native **Surreal** teams up with **DJ Balance** to record a brand new album full of jazzy production with that welcome boom-bap flavor. The *Future Classic* album is out now. Check for it and add it to your 'must have' list.

When hip-hop meets R&B it can sometimes produce scary results. **Liquid** strikes gold on his new Gotee Records release *Tales From The Badlands*. He has been bubbling near the surface for years now with some excellent production. He puts together the total package on this new CD.

Soul P. (fka Soul Plasma) has a new project slated this fall. Beatmart Recordings inked him to a recording contract earlier in the year and deservedly so, as Soul P. is one of the hardest working artists around. Be looking for his new release later this Winter. (Beatmart.com)

Sphere of Hip Hop is currently working on a 2-hour radio show that will also feature occasional guest DJ's. It will be airing regularly on a major satellite radio network. Look for more exciting details on this soon! In other related news… Sphere recently launched some new features on the site including a Blog section and a growing myspace page directory. Of course you can find the same great and thorough hip-hop coverage you have come to appreciate. Don't be a stranger.

Gotta check these releases out…
JustMe *One Man's Trash*
Surreal & DJ Balance *Future Classic*
Pigeon John *Summertime Pool Party*
LeCrae *After The Music Stops*
Liquid *Tales From The Badlands*
Propaganda *I Am Not Them*
Sivion *Spring of the Songbird*
Bobby Bishop *Government Name (SE)*
The Procussions *5 Sparrows for 2 Cents*
Cookbook&Uno Mas *While They Slept*
Cookbook&Uno Mas *Robertson Bullies EP*

Get more hip-hop news and MP3 downloads at sphereofhiphop.com

Glen Clark & the Family

A STORY WORTH RE-TELLING

"Evil, if it could, would destroy Jesus Christ."

This is the revelation Glen Clark had about the music that made him famous. Or infamous, as he might admit himself. What music could host lyrics so heinous as to warrant such a reminder from the Almighty as to the power and intent of those who deign to be His nemesis? Better that Clark tell the story...

BY JAMIE LEE RAKE

As an entrepreneur in the Florida Songwriter's Association and Tampa's complex of music venues borne out of The Ritz Theater, "We didn't necessarily call it death metal in the beginning," says Clark of the most extreme of the music born of his trade organization's weekly meetings in the 1980s. "I was encouraging original music, but it wasn't necessarily to do what they were doing."

For whatever reason, dark forces gathered around Clark's initiative to encourage local songwriting in Florida to connect with Hollywood's interest in making more movies there. Throwing himself into this endeavor, however, came by route of heartbreak and earlier spiritual weirdness about which Clark had little say.

"I got married out of high school, and in college, my wife left me," Clark reminisces of the origin of his suicidal despondency. But, "God, He really saved me. I wanted to know why, 'cause it didn't make any sense to me." Seeking his life's divine directive under a pine tree on his grandparents' farm, he obtained a vision of a campground for drug rehab he thought the Lord wanted him to open. Lack of co-operation from his family's "religious leader," as Clark calls him, due to his involuntary divorce and his parents' dismissive words about insane asylums full of people who took the Bible literally eventually led Clark to the big city. And his complicity in Florida's burgeoning extreme metal scene.

The growth of the Florida Songwriter's Association Clark founded "needed a home, and we found a place in Ybor City, a historic district of Tampa where I had all these boarded up buildings for nothing." Said venue was the Ritz, now The Masquerade, and its attendant complex of rooms. By finagling around city alcohol ordinances and avoiding organized crime, "I became this booking, promoting kind of manager person who started this whole scene that actually became a series of clubs."

Allowing the sale of adult beverages at all-ages shows figured into his success, but so did the zeitgeist of Florida's mid-to-late '80s convergence of musical scenes. Not only death metal, but hardcore, oi, ska industrial and goth (before adopting his Marilyn Manson persona, Brian Warner was a regular presence) acolytes flocked to Clark's entertainment complex. "We would do 2,000-3,000 (kids) in one show. We'd put, like, eight bands in, that would be techno...skinhead music... hardcore punk music. It was like a big mosh pit."

Somewhere amid these salacious salad days, Clark remarried, but matrimony didn't abate the appetites that grew proportionately to his success. "I was highly addicted to alcohol, cocaine, sex, not necessarily in that order." To accomodate his hedonism, one of the apartments upstairs to the Ritz was dedicated to, in Clark's discreetly phrasing, "entertainment purposes."

Heretofore, Clark was under the impression that the bands coming up in the strains of extreme metal he was cultivating, "were just trying to find another way to sell records, to be a little further out there, a little stranger." A double dose of the gravity of the situation convinced him otherwise.

"One night, God met me at the theater. I could feel evil in the room. It felt kind of like fear. I listened to the band...conjuring up demonic forces and calling up demons.

"I went, ''Whoa! These guys are serious about their Satan worship!'" On another night, Clark witnessed the vocalist of Pagan Faith describe "what Jesus Christ would do to him sexually... That's when it hit me. I said 'Jesus! That's my Jesus!' He was there when I wanted to die. Jesus was the only thing that ever made sense to me. Now I've started this thing...I've opened up this pit to hell."

Repentance came quickly, as did a series of menacing retributions, including one dead rat that found its way into the crib of the baby the Clarks were expecting.

Not long after withdrawing his involvement with the Ritz, Clark became a Nashville-bred cCm singer, performing innovative multimedia concerts and garnering a Long-Form Video of the Year Dove Award nomination in the early '90s. But, the child who replaced that bloody rodent in that crib would bring his father into the more organic musical ministry in which the whole Clark clan is now involved.

That son, Beau, was born with Crouzon's Syndrome, a condition causing the soft spots of an infant's head to grow together. It leaves no room for the brain to grow. Beau would require various reconstructive surgeries. Clark promised obedience to his Lord to keep his boy alive. Flying against doctors' expectations of Beau becoming a vegetable, who would be fortunate to survive for a year, he has instead brought the folksy Glen Clark & The Family to artistic fruition.

"When Beau was 13 years old, we were going to have to do another major surgery. We had to do something to prepare him for it. The Lord told me to get him a keyboard for Christmas. We were a faith-based ministry; we didn't have a lot. But that was the family Christmas present."

Long story short(ened), Beau learns his dad's songs on those keys, teaches them to his siblings, the rest of the brood picks up complimentary instruments, and hence, the touring and recording Family. "He wasn't supposed to talk. Now he built the band behind me. Who am I to question it?" asks Clark of his miraculous musical prodigy scion.

Though the band that Beau built is represented well on 2005's Grrr Records release, *Glen Clark & The Family*, the road is where to know them best. It's there where they take their Great Commission to everyone from Harley-Davidson fanatics in Sturgis, South Dakota to lesbians in Asheville, North Carolina. It's street-based, still faith-based, with Beau, solo artist Daniele, and other young'uns, some not even old enough for kindergarten.

Clark could write a book. And should. From his experiences with Deicide and Obituary to advice he'd like to give to the rockers playing Cornerstone Festival with their eyes on stardom ("Someday I hope to have a platform to do that," he says of wanting to share his musical / ministerial perspective), his wealth of insight can't be contained even by a story such as this.

After years of fearing his survivors in the scene he helped spawn, Clark now proclaims, "I'm to a place where there's nothing to be afraid of, nothing to be ashamed of. If God can use any of my past testimony, I want Him to be able to use it to reach people."

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BY CHRIS TROUTMAN

T Bone Burnett

HEROES NEVER DIE

BY DAN MACINTOSH

FOR MANY, T BONE BURNETT'S NAME IS NOTHING MORE THAN A PROMINENTLY PLACED PRODUCER'S CREDIT ON NUMEROUS ALBUMS. IN MOST CASES THESE ARE ROOTS ROCK – FOR LACK OF A BETTER TERM – RELEASES. BUT TO A SELECT FEW WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN MUSIC COMMUNITY, BURNETT IS AN ICONIC FIGURE, RIGHT UP THERE WITH OTHER HALLOWED FIGURES LIKE BONO AND BRUCE COCKBURN. NOT COINCIDENTLY, BURNETT HAS RECORDED WITH EACH OF THESE GREAT MEN, AND IN COCKBURN'S CASE, EVEN ACTED AS HIS PRODUCER.

But even if some of the artists he's produced draw blank stares from you, you've no doubt seen a few of the movies featuring his work. He won a Grammy Award for producing 2001's *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* for instance. He also played a hand in the soundtracks for *Cold Mountain*, *A Mighty Wind*, *Crossing Jordan*, and *Ladykillers*. He also was the executive producer for the Johnny Cash blockbuster, *Walk The Line*.

In addition to being an esteemed producer – this is for you music history buffs – Burnett began his recording career in the Alpha Band, which also included Steven Soles and David Mansfield as members, and later toured in Bob Dylan's famous Rolling Thunder Review in the Seventies.

He may be an outspoken believer, but Burnett's name is not often exhaled in the same breath as Michael W. Smith's or Steven Curtis Chapman's. That's because Burnett has never recorded for a Christian label. Rather than infiltrating the contemporary Christian music world, he's allowed intelligent and adventurous Christians to discover him by themselves, instead. The closest he's come to direct involvement in the Christian music community was when he produced Sam (formerly Leslie) Phillips' pivotal *The Turning* album. He's credited by many with helping transform this formerly screechy, preachy singer/songwriter into an alluring and insightful ingénue. And like Burnett, Phillips now also exists just outside the oftentimes limiting Christian music industry.

In 2006, T Bone Burnett set out on his first solo tour in twenty years. He's traveling with Jacob Dylan as his opening act. This younger Dylan's band, The Wallflowers, is one of the many notable acts Burnett has produced over the years. In fact, Burnett worked on The Wallflowers' multi-platinum *Bringing Down The Horse* album in the mid-nineties. His personal touring band features a few high profile and familiar Burnett collaborators. The extraordinary Marc Ribot is working the guitar, and the steady Jim Keltner is holding down drums. Twenty years is a long time between road treks for any act, but this is one especially unusual year for Burnett. He's just released his first new studio effort in fourteen years, titled *The True False Identity*, and simultaneously put out *Twenty Twenty: The Essential T Bone Burnett*, which picks and chooses many of the highlights from his underrated solo career.

Ironically, *The True False Identity* was birthed during a time when Burnett was going through a bit of a musical identity crisis of his own. But instead of crippling the artist, this temporarily confusing spell ended up infusing his new songs with newfound, open minded enthusiasm. "I was just free," he recently told the L.A. Times. "I was happy to hear new things. I was completely wide open. So I wanted to allow myself to rediscover music from scratch. I felt it was an incredible gift to study music hard for 30 years and then just completely go back to nothing. I sort of had beginner's mind imposed on me, and now I'm just trying to stay there."

T Bone Burnett's political/social identity, at least, is one of the primary personality traits revealed through his new work. So is his angry young man side. His disgust is squarely focused on George W. Bush. He never mentions W by name, mind you, but you know George Jr. is being sung about when Burnett complains, "They don't make imposters like John Wayne anymore," during "Fear Country." Bush also appears to be the target of "Palestine Texas," which features these biting words: "When you come out of this self-delusion / You're going to need a soul transfusion." The latter track also includes multiple verses with a rhyme scheme that may remind you of Dr. Seuss poems. And yet, this overly familiar meter still works. Burnett's anger is spread beyond just Mr. President, however, such as during "Zombieland," where he complains about our national numbness to all its crippling social problems. He might easily be targeting the remnants of the Moral Majority with "Blinded by the Darkness," which rails against the impractical idea of legislating morality.

"I don't even think of it as political, because it's more social," Salon quotes Burnett saying, "The issues are more about who we are as a people and who we are as a culture. I'm not a pundit and I don't follow any politicians – literally and figuratively. I'm not interested. I'd much rather spend time finding out what Oscar Wilde thinks than what any politician thinks."

Burnett is most closely associated with the roots rock movement – whatever that is – although this new effort contains far more rock than roots. It's especially disjointedly beautiful during "Every Time I Feel the Shift," which includes some fine Marc Ribot electric guitar work. It also has what sounds like a Black gospel quartet on backing vocals.

T Bone Burnett is unquestionably one of pop music's best producers. But before he began to make a name for himself with production efforts that ranged from Los Lobos to Ralph Stanley, he first established the reputation of an excellent songwriter. His 40-track 'best of' collection contains many of his pivotal works. He's revealed to be as obsessed with cultural icons, like Marilyn Monroe ("Fatally Beautiful," a cover of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend"), as he is with God's love ("River Of Love," "Power of Love"). Over his noteworthy career he's touched upon country ("No Love At All"), fractured folk ("The People's Limousine"), and multi-lingual pop ("Image"). In contrast to so many TV evangelists, who are quick to point their boney and accusatory fingers at all the sinners in the world, Burnett is quicker to notice first the log in his own eye, exemplified by the honest self-observations that fill "Criminals." And rather than using his artistic platform to condemn his fellow man, he chooses instead to reach out the hand of help with "Shake Yourself Loose." It's a cliché to say that retrospect makes for 20/20 vision; but this fine sampling of Burnett's work shows him to be a songwriter who has always had perfectly clear vision.

Unfortunately, Burnett is oftentimes outshone by some mighty big musical stars on his own songs. For example, the electric guitar heard on "Fatally Beautiful," which is included on his retrospective, is none other than The Who's Pete Townshend, and Elvis Costello adds electric six-string to "The People's Limousine." But once you get past the star power glare, you'll soon be basking in the glow of Burnett's own unique light. That's because he's a great songwriter that doesn't get recognized nearly enough for his deep lyrical skills. He's not a great singer, like his pal Bono is, but his vitriolic anger comes through loud and clear, whenever such emotion is called for, and his moral indignation is completely tangible throughout his illustrious catalogue.

This flurry of new activity is great news for T Bone Burnett admirers. But it's both a blessing and a curse that Burnett is also a talented behind-the-scenes producer. It means that it could be a long time before the next studio album comes along. And that would be a darn shame. But then again, this current self-focus may mark a new resurgence of Burnett solo activity, which would be a wonderful thing. Let's hope Burnett's *The True False Identity* is not a false start, but a new beginning.

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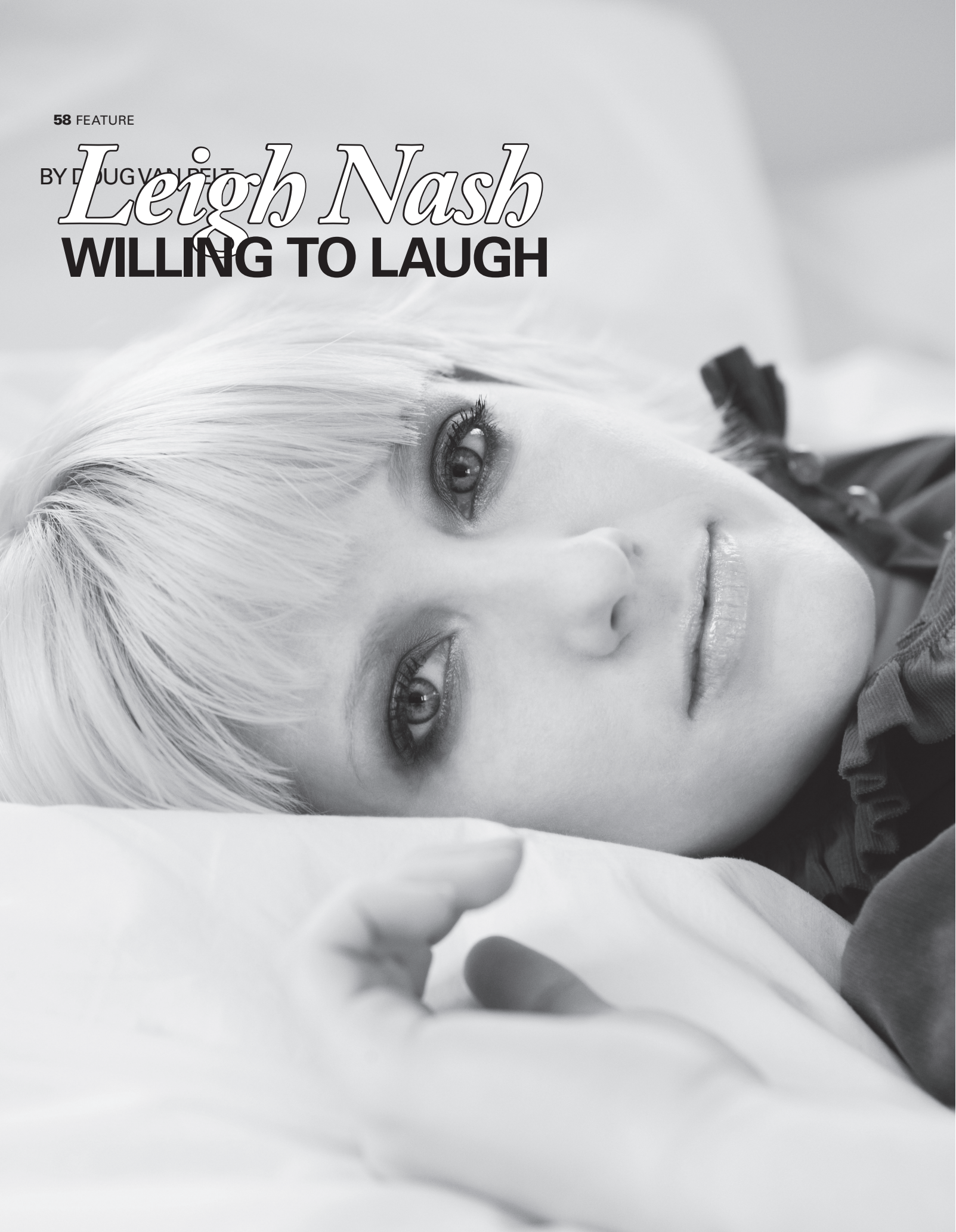
Photo by Jesse Dylan

Leigh Nash
WILLING TO LAUGH

BY DOUG VAN PELT



INTERVIEWING LEIGH NASH WAS ONE OF THE WEIRDEST EXPERIENCES OF MY LIFE. IT WAS A "PHONER" AND SHE WAS ON A CELL PHONE IN AN AIRPORT AND I WAS ON A CORDLESS IN THE HM OFFICES. I COULD HEAR HER FINE, BUT SHE COULDN'T HEAR ME HARDLY AT ALL. SO IN STEPS THE PUBLICIST, WHO REPEATS ALL OF MY QUESTIONS (NO MATTER HOW BIZARRE) LIKE A FOREIGN TRANSLATOR DURING A SPEECH. PROPS TO LEIGH FOR BEING A GOOD SPORT ABOUT IT ALL...

It's been a long time since I've wandered over to the small REX record tent...
Oh, yes it has!

...And saw you performing barefoot with Sixpence None The Richer... Take us through some highlights that come to mind when you look back through your musical journey.
Well, uh, that Cornerstone performance is actually one of them and I still have pictures and, I was just looking at pictures from that very performance the other day. I had worn my mother's wedding shoes for some reason to that concert, it was in a tiny tent and there was mud everywhere and I put those on... I had to take those shoes off, because I was ruining them. But, that was one of my favorite shows ever. I just felt really exhilarated being in front of people and I thought that festival was so cool and, I still do. I love to go back and perform there. So, that was a highlight and, definitely a memory that really stuck out and then, just getting to travel the world with some of my best friends was just the greatest thing I've ever done besides having my son.

You married another working musician, Mark Nash... How has that helped relationship-wise? And how has that helped career-wise?
Well, I think relationship-wise more than us being in the same business, we just seemed to have been cut out for each other. I think it was definitely meant for us to meet, and we met at Cornerstone. And in everything Mark is just really patient. I don't know anyone else that could put up with me, cause I'm a delightful person; but with anything like that, there's always a curve and he gets all of it and it's non-stop. So, he's very patient and I adore him and so we really do get along. And it's wonderful that we understand what the other person is doing, career-wise. And then I think as far as that helping me in my career, it's just been nice to have that anchor. I mean, I think it's invaluable, because without that I can't imagine where I'd be if I didn't feel anchored.

What are some unique challenges, if any, that this arrangement brings?
I guess, now I'm on the road and Mark is on the road and usually it's the other way around with couples and certainly I've been the one that stayed home, too, while Mark traveled quite a bit at the beginning of our marriage; but, you know, it's a little bit of a challenge to stay connected even when I'm gone and, you get close to the people you're out on the road with. So, that's a little bit of a challenge, but it's also... you know, it's nice to get a break, 'cause we've been married for ten years, so it's nice to leave town every once in awhile.

I love the new album, *Blue on Blue*...
Thank you so much!

How was the writing and recording process for you?
It was really exciting. I had such a good time writing for the record and I felt like I was accomplishing something amazing every single day, because I was able to be a full-time mom, but then leave for a couple hours a day and write songs and I felt like, you know, that was such a gift to be able to do that. I was really thankful that. The situation that Mark and I have is that when one of us is really super busy with something, the other one can pick up the slack where our child is concerned. So, with him we always have his dad or me right by his side. So, I felt so inspired by motherhood and being able to hang out with him all the time and I was so in love with him, so that when it came time to write songs there was no shortage of subject matter. I loved the writing process and when it came time to record it, I got to work with Pierre Marchand – this amazing Canadian producer. He lives in this beautiful place in Quebec and I fell in love with the land up there; and the people were amazing. We just had a really wonderful time recording the record and spending that time with Pierre. I respect him so much and he did a beautiful job. I felt really good, too, because I got out of Nashville to do the writing and the recording. I love Nashville and it's been home for such a long time, but I just felt like, you know, Sixpence was so deeply rooted and based in Nashville that I just, for some reason, and I just can't explain it ... I just felt like I had to get out for awhile. But, now I'm back and I'm glad.

What are your favorites? What songs stand out to you, and why?
I love the song "Just A Little," because it's about Henry and the first time I had to leave him. Sad songs are always my favorite songs. That song makes me cry and I love that. And, let's see, I love "Between the Lines" and "Along The Wall" is the one I wrote with Pierre. He's a great songwriter and I enjoyed writing with him, because he's real ... I don't know how to put it – bossy? So, I kind of had my tail kicked a bit. It was interesting, but I think it ended up being the best song of the record, so it really paid off.

What are you hoping to tell the world with this album, touring, and broadcast opportunities?
Well, basically, I'm kind of learning this lesson really slowly, so you have to bear with me. I don't have all the answers right now and I guess I never will. But I'm hoping to, at least... I'm hoping to get this lesson, but I think God's trying to teach me something right now. The gist of it, so far, is that I, and this may sound really elementary to you… well to both of you (laughs), cause there's three of us here. But, I just feel like I need to be open and that if I'm saying my prayers and asking to be in God's will and that He needs to use me the way He wants, then the rest will come. So, I want it to be what He wants, not what I want. And so, what I've learned, like, instead of, maybe in the past, I've thought, 'Well, if I'm going to do something great, I've got to be really driven and think about it all the time.' But I really think it's more about staying open and not having your hands gripped so tightly that He can't open them to use them. So that's kinda my mantra right now. There's that: breathe, take one minute at a time, and let my thoughts and my heart be speaking constantly for God. Like, you know, 'With every breath, let's just make this about what You want.' It's a lot easier that way. Does that make any sense?

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Photo by Raina Kirn & Wilson Barry

Describe any conflict with your faith and the amount of notoriety you've attained.
Aw, I don't feel like I have any conflict with it. I've stayed really, humble, I think, for the most part, so I never really got this conflict. I never got too big for my britches. I think I understand my place. I think that anything I have or anything I've achieved is because of the talent God gave me. And so there's a responsibility that comes with that and my responsibility is to say who I am and to stay true to who I was made to be. And, you know, hopefully stay on the good side of who I'm supposed to be and not go to the dark side. The biggest conflict I have with my faith sometimes – and I'm totally open, because I think God wants us to share these things with each other and help each other – I have a hard time understanding why horrible things happen to people all the time, all around us. Good people and children, you know? Like, that kind of stuff blows my mind and upsets my faith. Maybe that means I really immature, but at least I'm honest about it. So, that's the biggest conflict I have and I don't really feel like I have that much notoriety right now, which is nice. It's nice to be known a little bit, but it's not like a freak show when I leave the house. (laughs)

What are some of your most crazy TV, radio, or PR experiences?
The TV experience was definitely the Letterman thing. That was insane ... and that was really great. I guess the craziest thing that ever happened was in the Phillipines. We were in Manila at this mall and we were in a bus and these people came rushing at the bus and we thought they were going to tip it over. It was kind of a Beatles moment. I think those poor people do that to everybody that comes through, so I don't think it was just us (laughs). Oh Lord, that was terrifying. I mean, people were tearing at our clothes and our hair on the way into the mall, too, but that was disturbing. And, they didn't have shoes, but they all bought Sixpence records and that broke my heart, but, what are you going to do?

How has becoming a mother changed your outlook on life?
Unfortunately, it makes me worry a lot more. So, I try to just give my son over to God in my prayers, but that's really hard for me – really hard, because he's the greatest thing that's ever happened to me. I mean, you love your kid so much that, you almost have to numb yourself to it or it would kill you if you really felt the weight of it. It's really intense. So, I think it actually helps to let go and give your children to God and over to His will and do the best you can. I'm trying to be the best mother I can be and Mark is an amazing father. He's so great and I'm so grateful for that. So, it's changed a lot for me, but I think really in good ways, great ways.

Okay, if you had the attention of female musicians right now, what would you want to say to them?
Ya'll go to hell. (laughs). I'm sorry! I'm just kidding. I'm totally joking. I just wanted to say it, cause I thought it was funny. No, I would be really, really excited to have their attention. I always want to preach to young girls that are starting to do this, who feel like I have all the answers, so I'd tell them all kinds of things. I thought I did a really good job out on the road, cause I was out there from sixteen on... I'm a really good little tour person and treated people nicely. I can look back on it and *really* hold my head up and be proud in the way I acted 99% of the time. So, I guess I'd have all kinds of stuff to say. I wish they'd listen to me more often.

> "It's nice to be known a little bit, but it's not like a freak show when I leave the house."

How do you like being solo vs. being in a band. What are the differences for you?
I like being solo right now. I mean, I loved being in a band for as long as it lasted, which was fourteen years. But, this is really nice to have all the space that I want and need and to choose who I have around me. That's *really*, really nice. That's quite a luxury. And I can have as little or as much drama as I want. It's my show, and I *really* dig that. I hope I'm able to build a bigger team, cause right now it's me and one person (laughs). But, it's really good so far. I'm just excited about decision making and if I make a mistake or there's a mistake made it's going to be my fault – it's going to be on my head and that's nice, actually. I know that might sound weird, but I just like being in charge for once. And it's my label, which is also great. I feel a lot of freedom in that, and I'm really thankful to Nettwerk for helping me with that.

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go back to singing about a broken romantic relationship that I had stepped over; but I felt tremendously inadequate. My faith wasn't strong enough to say anything to anybody. I wasn't sure I actually believed what I was saying…

"But with this record, I wouldn't say I've resolved all those doubts, or that I've come to believe wholeheartedly in all the Christian doctrine of any particular denomination, but Christianity that … the love of Jesus embodied and taught and lived and the reality of God being the source of that love and the eternal light and truth – to me, there's no more doubt about that. And so I felt more grounded than I had – an eternal sense of purpose. Not that I was trying to convert anybody to become a Christian and start going to a building on Sundays, but rather to inspire people to consider."

As we talked, Weiss apologized several times for rambling, admitting that if turned loose he would talk endlessly all night. He talked about some of the radical concepts of love and giving that Jesus threw out there, and how most of us conveniently try to squirm out of those sacrificial actions that are supposed to mark His followers. He identified with David, who once spoke of God as "too wonderful to understand." I asked him about his perceived transparency on stage. He politely asked if it'd be okay if we stopped and prayed. He offered the interview and the chance to say something to an audience of many up to the Lord – a refreshing practice that this journalist hadn't seen in a while. And when he admitted to basically being a big fake up on stage, I knew that I was talking to someone that was for real. An honest-to-goodness, confess and admit my wrongs almost to a fault human being that's applying his energy and mind to the teachings of Christ.

This is the type of person you enjoy listening to; and the type of person you won't refuse a sandwich from – even if it's 70% grape jelly and only 30% peanut butter. Aaron Weiss is a special person. A special artist. We would do well to receive his gifts with gratitude – whether they be overly moist sandwiches or ramblings of his thoughts. He might say or do something crazy someday, but a big-picture focus should appreciate what he brings to his audience with gusto. It's not every day that you run into an Aaron Weiss.

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What **Buckcherry** Says

BUCKCHERRY IS THE KIND OF ROWDY ROCK 'N' ROLL BAND THAT KNOWS THE GENRE LIKE THE OLD BLUES MASTERS KNEW THEIRS, WHERE ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING, AND IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT THAT, JUST FAKE IT AND MASK IT WITH LOTS OF DISTORTED GUITARS. AS FUN AS AC/DC AND AS FRENETIC AS JET OR ANY OF A SLEW OF RECENT ROCK REVIVALISTS, BUCKCHERRY HAS GOT IT GOING ON. SIT DOWN AND LISTEN TO THE UNUSUAL, CASUAL, AND ANIMATED CONVERSATION BETWEEN JOSH TODD AND EDITOR DOUG VAN PELT.

Photo: Randee St. Nicholas

Define and describe the differences between being unsigned and independent and having a publicity team behind you.
Well, when you're unsigned and independent you just gotta work a little harder, you know? And, um, it's really no different, you know, you just gotta work really hard promoting your product; which is your record and your band, and, you know, the harder you work the better publicity you're going to get. It's all a catch 22, you know, because nobody really wants to get involved until you've sold enough records and in order to sell enough records you gotta kinda get some exposure; so you know, it's tough. The great thing about the internet right now is that it's so instrumental for bands that don't have any money to promote their (bleep), you know, to get it to a good place, you know, so I think that's when the internet is really workin' for everybody – with myspace and everything like that.

Yeah.
That's the difference to me. You know, having a publicity team behind you is great if they're making it happen for you in the right light. You know what I mean? If they're making sure everywhere you're at, they're making sure it's the right magazine and the right event and all that (bleep).

Yeah. Well, I got a good follow up question to that. What are the three biggest rock and roll lessons that you could, uh, kinda share with us?
Three biggest rock and roll lessons? Uh, never do a show loaded; you'll regret it. Um... Let's see. Make sure you have an attorney look at any contract you ever sign before you sign it. And, let's see, biggest rock and roll lesson … always wear a rubber.

Okay, a couple follow up questions to that. How loaded is loaded?
How loaded is loaded?

Yeah.
Drunk. You know, just loaded. Completely. I mean, you think you're going, like, to be amazing and you think you're so great when you're loaded and then you see the footage back the next day. I suggest to anybody who thinks they're great loaded to video tape themselves and watch it the next day when they wake up in the morning and check out their performance. Or even record the audio and hear what you sound like.

Okay. How do you deal with an attorney's advice when he says, "Oh, you shouldn't sign this because this right here will do this to you." When it's really not what you want to hear?
Um, how do you deal with it?

Yeah.
Well, you gotta make a decision, you know? Who you want to get into business with? I don't know, you gotta hold your ground or it will affect you for a long time after.

What are the worst couple of things that could go wrong when you head out on stage and how have you handled any said circumstances?
Worst things that could go wrong on stage? Monitors. Monitors are screwed up in a big way and you can't hear yourself or you can't hear certain things. The only

thing you gotta do is try to relax and remedy the problem and try to stay focused. You just can't panic, you know, or you'll freeze up. You don't want to freeze up.

Good advice. If you could accurately forecast the future of Buckcherry, what would it be and what are your goals and dreams for the band?
Oh, okay. My prediction? Multi-platinum records. Definitely getting into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and I want to be an arena rock band. I want to be a band that can sell out an arena as a headliner. Those are my predictions for Buckcherry.

Right on. Well, conversely, if you could go back in the past and say anything to anyone in your past. What would you say to whom and why?
Oh wow! Wow, man. Well I've pretty much done all that, you know. I've pretty much faced all the people. There's a few people that I would, uh, I don't really want to name names; but, you know, there's a few people that if homicide was legal I'd really take some action. I've got a few enemies.

Well, um…
I wouldn't really say much. I'd eliminate the problem.

Well, how important is negative space in your music? How important are starts and stops – especially to a groove?
Uh, it's really important. I think that's what's really lacking in rock music – is a lot of space. You know? That's why I love AC/DC so much; because they always had a lot of space in their music and it really allowed a song to breathe. That's really important for us, and that's why we don't like to incorporate too many instruments on a track, because the more (bleep) you throw in, the less you know what's going on. You kinda get lost in a jumble of noise. If a song's great, it's gonna be great with just the four components; which is bass, drums and guitar and vocals. So, we just try to keep it simple. That's what the Beatles did and they're great.

They did alright didn't they?
Yeah.

What did you think of the DaVinci Code?
I didn't read the book. I wanted to read the book before I saw the movie. I enjoyed the movie. I didn't know anything that it was about. I had a good time seeing it. So, I didn't really know much about that. I know everybody's read the book but I haven't.

Yeah, I enjoyed it too. What do you think of Jesus Christ?
Jesus is my homeboy. What do I think of Jesus Christ? I think Jesus had some (bleep) balls and, uh, I dig him. I'm definitely not a holy roller. I don't believe in religion, organized religion. I do believe in God and I think Jesus is the (bleep).

Right on. What do you think of His claims to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?"
No one comes to the father but by me? I don't know anything about that. What do I think about that? I don't know, I don't think much about it.

Well, here's a weird question. Um, red, black, and white color schemes are all over your album. How does that combination move you?
Red, black, and white? We just thought they looked good together, you know? That's just what we chose at the time. I don't know. We didn't really have... It wasn't like something we had to have. Once it happened, we were like, "Yeah, let's just keep this scheme going." We kinda did it with our merch, too, so... I don't know, it doesn't have any special meaning.

Yeah, I didn't think so, but I, ah… I certainly dig it. It's the scheme of our magazine. Our brand is red, black, and white and it's pretty darn strong.
Oh cool, yeah. I think those colors look good together, you know?

Well, After all the self-help books, what do women still not get about men?
What do women still not get about men? That's a good question. Um, let's see. What women don't get about men is that, all we want to be told, is that, we just want to be encouraged to be great men and we want serviced in the ... in the, uh, physical department. And then we want silence and that's what they don't get.

Alright. Let's say you got booked for this massive show, it was like a planet gig. Maybe it was like a fund raiser like Farm-Aid or something and you had to follow a preacher at this show. Who would be your preacher and why? What message would he preach?
Say that again real quick. I'm sorry.

Okay, you're playing this massive world gig. It's like on the world's stage and billions of people are watching. You're going on after a preacher and you get to pick the preacher and who are you gonna pick and why? And, what is his message going to be?
My preacher would be Sam Kinison. God rest his soul. Because he was a preacher at one time, but he's dead now. But that would be my preacher – Sam Kinison and he would preach the Gospel, 'cause I've seen him do it on the Comedy Theater and he's (bleep) amazing. I would have him deliver just the most ridiculous sermon with a lot of profanity in it. Just basically say, um, I don't know... I just, I don't know. I don't know what he would be saying, actually. Just to go after your dreams and don't let anyone tell you anything to get you off the path of where you want to go. Listen to your heart. That's probably it.

Let's say we had a day off and I took you into Best Buy with a blank check. What would you buy?
Best Buy with a blank check? I would probably buy computers and then I'd re-sell them and take the money. No, I'd probably buy computers and music DVD's like live performances, you know? They have a lot of selection in there. But I'd definitely get a nice, real fast, computer.

What's the best album you've bought this year?
The best album I bought this year would have to be Slipknot's *9.0*.

Oh yeah?
Yeah.

What did you like about it?
You know, I just don't think live records sound that great and it sounds great. I'm a huge fan and, uh, it motivates me.

What was your experience with Slash McKagan and Sorem?
It was a very short experience. We did a show for a Randy Castillo benefit in L.A. Me and Keith from Buckcherry did a show and there was all this buzz around the show and, uh, at the time Keith and I were the only ones left in Buckcherry – workin' on songs and stuff. We were like, "Well, it felt good to be in a band." So, we decided to be a band. They dug it and we dug it. And we went in and wrote about nine songs together. We wrote in a studio about a month and a half straight and then Slash came in one day and abruptly pulled the plug and that was it. Then it became the G N' R Project and then it became Velvet Revolver.

Well, how has some of the stuff you've dealt with as a band and some of the personnel changes, uh, and just experiences for you… Uh, how has that been for you? What has been your experience and how has that affected you?
Um, sometimes you never want to break up a situation, but what people don't know about Buckcherry is that after the *Time Bomb*, sorta our second record, three of the guys quit. So, the lineup we've got going on now is the lineup we've always wanted. Sometimes personnel changes are just necessary, you know, and all that's painful going through it. Your overall outcome is great if it needs to be done, you know?

Alright. Well pick one: Bon Scott or Brian Johnson?
Bon Scott.

And why Bon?
Uh, he – he just, uh... I just like his voice better, you know? I think he had a real genuine rock and roll voice. I like them both, man. I gotta tell you: I love them both. That's really hard to pick. But, uh, I just love the way Bon approached his lyrics and he was definitely a character and he had a very unique sounding voice.

Okay. David Lee Roth vs. Sammy Hagar.
David Lee Roth. Hands down. That dude's amazing. I never saw... I wasn't really into Van Halen as a kid, you know, and I did a show with him. Well, actually, Buckcherry did a show with him awhile back. A long time ago in Ohio. It was the David Lee Roth Band. It was this band and they did all these Van Halen songs and he was (bleep) amazing live. I couldn't believe it. And I just... I never really got it. Everyone told me how great he was and he was so good. I was just blown away.

I would agree with you on both those choices. Where would the music world be if Radiohead hadn't existed?
If Radiohead didn't exist?

Yeah.
I don't know. I think rock music would definitely be a lot more fun and there would be a lot more risk-taking, you know? Cause the only people taking risks in music is rappers.

Interesting. I like that. Um…
Rappers and heavy, heavy bands that don't get played on the radio.

Like death metal and black metal stuff?
Yeah.

Well, let's say you're in the market… You're looking for a woman you want to spend some time with, maybe the rest of your life; and, uh … and let's say you don't want to meet her at one of your shows. You want to meet her at some sort of home setting. How awkward is that – that look sometimes in that groupie setting, because some girl wants to meet you because you're the lead singer for Buckcherry?
That would be awful. I would never commit... I would never commit myself to something like that, because you'd always be thinking, 'Is she really into me or is she just into the persona of who I am?' You know? And, uh, I wouldn't do that. In fact, I'm married and my wife didn't know... I mean, she'd heard of Buckcherry, but she didn't know who I was or anything. And it was really important to me.

That's cool. I'm curious. Although, I know the next question might be personal and you can just say pass, but how did you meet?
How'd we meet? We met through a photographer friend of mine. He was taking some photos of me and I went to his place to look at my photos and it was taking him awhile, so I started looking at all of his shots and I saw this headshot of this really amazing looking girl. I asked him about her and he's like ... he gave me the run down on her and he was like, "Do you want to meet her?" And I was like, "Well, you know, sure." And I really didn't think anything of it and then the next time I went in to get my shots he gave me her number and said he called her and said it was cool to call her. So I called her and the rest is history.

"...I think Jesus had some (bleep) balls and, uh, I dig him."

If you could pick an ultimate lineup to take out, who would you take out?
The ultimate lineup? Okay. I would like to have a really, um, alternative-type festival with Slipknot headlining, because you can't really go on after Slipknot, you know? And PJ Harvey and Buckcherry and The Killers and ... let's see, Rage Against the Machine.

Wow. That would be hot. What are your thoughts about the whole situation in rock and roll today? A lot of the major tours, like, uh... Hypothetically, I don't know if this is the case, but Buckcherry gets a headlining tour and the second band on the slot, you know, puts x-amount of cash in the label's pocket or the band's pocket. Uh, what can be done about that?
You know this game well. So, what's the question?

Well, how do you feel about that? What can be done about that? Is that going to perpetuate itself and keep going or is something going to change, just what are your thoughts on it?
Well, my thoughts are: you know, it sucks that it goes on, but because it goes on, everybody's doing it, so... It's just part of regular business out here, which is unfortunate, because the bands that need the money the most are the ones that don't have a following, you know – to stay out on the road to get a following. It goes back to that whole theory, it's like, when you're a struggling actor, the more credits you have on your resume – as far as how many movies you've been in – the more movies you're going to get. But, in order to get in a movie... It's so hard, so, I don't know, man. I would like it to change, you know, but it's not going to change. Because bands that work so hard to get a following, they don't have to pay anybody, and they know that. And people want to be in front of an audience to get exposure, so they're going to pay for it.

Cool. Congrats. Well, anything else you want to add?
No, I'm good man. This was a good interview.

Alright thanks man. I enjoyed it.
Bye, bro.

Alright, I hope to see you on the road sometime soon.
Alright, see you.

Bye.

✖

Forgiving the Franklins

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAY FLOYD

Jay Floyd has spent the better part of his career making sure all the various objects, brands, and logos used in films (like *War of the Worlds*, *The School of Rock*, *Varsity Blues*) were all cleared by the powers that be. When it came time for him to make his writing/production/directing debut, he reached into his arsenal of stories and picked the one that had the least likelihood of getting outside support for. This movie, *Forgiving The Franklins*, has now screened at Sundance, San Francisco Film Festival and SXSW, and on its way to a hopeful theatrical release. It shows a rare and very unique angle of grace and redemption that will come as a surprise and shock to a lot of audiences.

"And there's some very cool Christians who are willing to take a look at things like that."

What inspired the film and tell me how the idea progressed; cause I assume you didn't have every single detail just drop in your lap, in your brain at one time.

No, that is interesting. Many years ago – I wanna say 12 years ago – I had the basic idea for a family that had a spiritual shift and came back and were sexually free, and I sat down to write it and I got to, like, page 12. I got to the car crash and stopped. The story just ran out of steam. I didn't know where it was gonna go; and where I thought it might go wasn't pleasing to me. It wasn't interesting. It was eight years or ten years when I started re-writing it. I had read a book called *Healing the Shame that Binds You*. It's a book about how shame runs your life and you don't know it. It's a horrifying book – scarier than anything Stephen King has ever written. Ha! I read it and this movie immediately came back to mind. I was like, 'That's what this movie's about!' I had this framework about what we were addressing with the subplot. The film and the movie came outta me in three weeks – no problem. I was able to write it very quickly once I matured enough to really understand what the subject matter was.

What negative responses have you received and who does the film speak to?

The first question: Let's see … the people who hated it? *Variety* gave us a wretched review. And I know that that reporter was there opening night at Sundance; and that audience brought the house down, so he was sitting there with a room full of people who were cheering this movie and hating it. I gotta tell you, I am morbidly fascinated by why people hate this movie, just cause it's so interesting. I don't have the total answer. I don't mind. I knew I wasn't making a movie for everybody. Clearly, when you watch this movie, it is obvious I wasn't trying make *Mrs. Doubtfire*, ya know, a movie that absolutely everyone would love. I feel that that (would be) a dumb choice. If you're making your introductory feature, why try to do something that everybody's seen a million times? So I picked the one story in my arsenal of stories that I happen to tell that I didn't think anybody would ever make in conjunction with me – that I couldn't raise money for. I picked the one that nobody would ever make otherwise. And that would definitely be this one. Who is the intended audience? I think that's a question for a marketing person. I don't think that's a question for an artist. I've been thinking about that a lot, because I get asked that question a lot. Most of the time I am an artist. That's what I am doing. I am letting the story tell me how to write it. Anybody who does the kind of writing I do – I have talked to a lot of people who have the same experience – the story tells you where it's going. These characters tell you what's gonna happen. It's like you are channeling it. And if you stop to say, 'Who's this for?' I think you stifle the expression. There's some people who I knew would like it, and then there's this audience I never would have guessed. I know that certain type of intellectuals really like the movie, because it is a conversation started about a topic that doesn't get discussed very often – that topic being shame. And how does religion teach you shame? Those conversations happen after this movie and that's great. That is one of the reasons I wrote it. So, I knew that the intellectual types would probably enjoy it; and then there were these other audiences that I had no idea that I was writing for – like women over the age of 80! I've had more than one woman over the age of 80 that I do not know come up to me and say, 'Your character's sex lives before they changed were exactly like my entire marriage.' And I had no idea I was writing a movie that would speak to women over the age 80. I had two women say to me, 'You made a movie for fat girls.' I had no idea, but people whose shame has run their life in some way … to me the movie speaks to people who are frustrated that the truth isn't being spoken very often in our society. Today people who are frustrated by the fact that the list of rules we were taught growing don't seem to have been based in reality. We were taught that you grow up and you have one job and you have one marriage and anything outside of that meant that you had problems. Guess what? It's not the truth. We were taught that relationships were supposed to be monogamous. Guess what? It's not true. Most people don't have monogamous relationships. I was shocked... It seems to be the norm that people were cheating on their spouses. Why are we talking about it as though it were the exception? I think that this movie addresses a bit of the frustration about the way we say the world is and the way it actually is are very, very different.

Fascinating. In your opinion, what would be the ramifications – both practical and theoretical – of having a burden of original sin removed from our lives?

Well, it depends. This movie takes that idea and applies that idea to people within a community that doesn't itself change. If everyone were to change, I think that a lot of problems would be alleviated. If an individual changes, it becomes much harder to function in today's society. I know that just from personal experience. I've done a lot of work on myself and I've become very conscious of ways that I am ruled by damage. And once you've identified in yourself, it is very easy to identify in others; and most people just don't want to know. A lot of people don't want to know where their damage is. Going through that kind of change makes it a little more difficult to move through the world gracefully. That was probably more theoretical. No, it was also practical. So, I think that if a group of people changes, I think the only thing it can add up to is beauty. An individual changing within a group is very difficult. That's what I find and that is the reason my movie takes the dark turn it does – because a group of people changes, but the greater group does not. People don't like being pushed to grow. They don't like it at all.

Okay, homosexuality and full frontal nudity: this is going to remove your film from many evangelical Christian audiences, so given that this barrier by choice from that group will make a lot of them avoid the film, what would you like to tell that audience in regards to your film?

What I would tell that audience is – I tell you this and then I'll tell you a story about what happened at

Sundance – "If you're feeling a little brave, go see it. And it is fine to hate, and it is fine to walk out, but test yourself and see if you can handle the subject matter." At Sundance, when I was doing the question and answer period afterwards, Doug, this guy stood up and, ya know, nicely kept, 40-ish man said he was there with an evangelical Lutheran group and several of them were in the audience and he was so moved by the movie that as he was talking he started to cry; and he said, "Ya know, I just want to apologize for the awful things that my people have done in the name of Christianity." And it was a very well attended screening, like 400 people in the room, and you could of heard a pin drop, because somebody was having this big emotional moment in public and people don't know how to handle that. Ha ha ha. I know I certainly didn't. I was expecting to get attacked, ya know? He said, "I am here with an evangelical Lutheran group," and I just postured my self. I was ready for the eggplant that was gonna be hurled at my head – ha ha – and it didn't happen. It really spoke to him. And there's some very cool Christians who are willing to take a look at things like that, ya know? They chose to go to that movie for a reason. The ones who will refuse to see it? Here's the deal: if somebody doesn't want to open their mind and doesn't want to change, there's nothing you can say to them. So that is what you have to say to them – nothing.

Some groups of people in the non-religious community may be disappointed that you didn't demonize or vilify the Christian characters. Why were you so kind to the believers?
Because I think that a relation to the divine – however you define that – is one of the most precious things in a person's life. Why would I vilify people who are trying to investigate – however misguided their ways or their past may be – they are trying to investigate the eternal question of, "What are we? Where did we come from? What is my spirit? Why am I who I am?" Why would I want to vilify that completely? Because, listen, everybody makes sense if you know their whole story. Evreybody – the most evil (bleep) in the whole world makes sense if you know their whole story. I don't believe they are born bad. I believe they get beat up and become that way.

What is your thought behind the motivation of Jesus to chop down the crosses? And why were new crosses being planted all the time? What didn't the cross-planters understand?
My perspective is of Jesus Christ as a human. If you believe He was the divine Son of God, but Jesus was a human being. He was not an ethereal creature, and being nailed to a cross and killed is not something anyone would have cared for very much, and so that symbol torment(ing) him makes perfect sense to me.

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FRIENDS WITH MICROPHONES

a compilation album to benefit Lifewater INTERNATIONAL

"If we had water we could plant food, if we had food our children would be healthy and strong. With water and food we would be free to live and grow.....and build a tomorrow we can believe in. Give us water, and give us hope." -- A Haitian Villager

FRIENDS WITH MICROPHONES
is a compilation album benefiting Lifewater International, a Christian training organization with water development goals serving the Kingdom of God. In an effort to fight disease and poverty worldwide, they empower people with the knowledge and resources to access, use, and maintain safe drinking water supplies.

This album is less of a celebration of music, clothing, or causes, and more of a celebration of Life. When it all is said and done and we're sitting around wondering where the years went, you know we'll wish we had given a little more, and hoarded a little less. In so many ways, Lifewater is a group of people who are willing to give Life away. So as you're listening to the album, consider how you can be involved globally in giving yourself away.

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SPOKEN
HASTE THE DAY
INHALE EXHALE
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LA SYMPHONY
WATASHI WA
DIZMAS
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MANAFEST
SEVENTH DAY SLUMBER
AND OTHER NICE PEOPLE..

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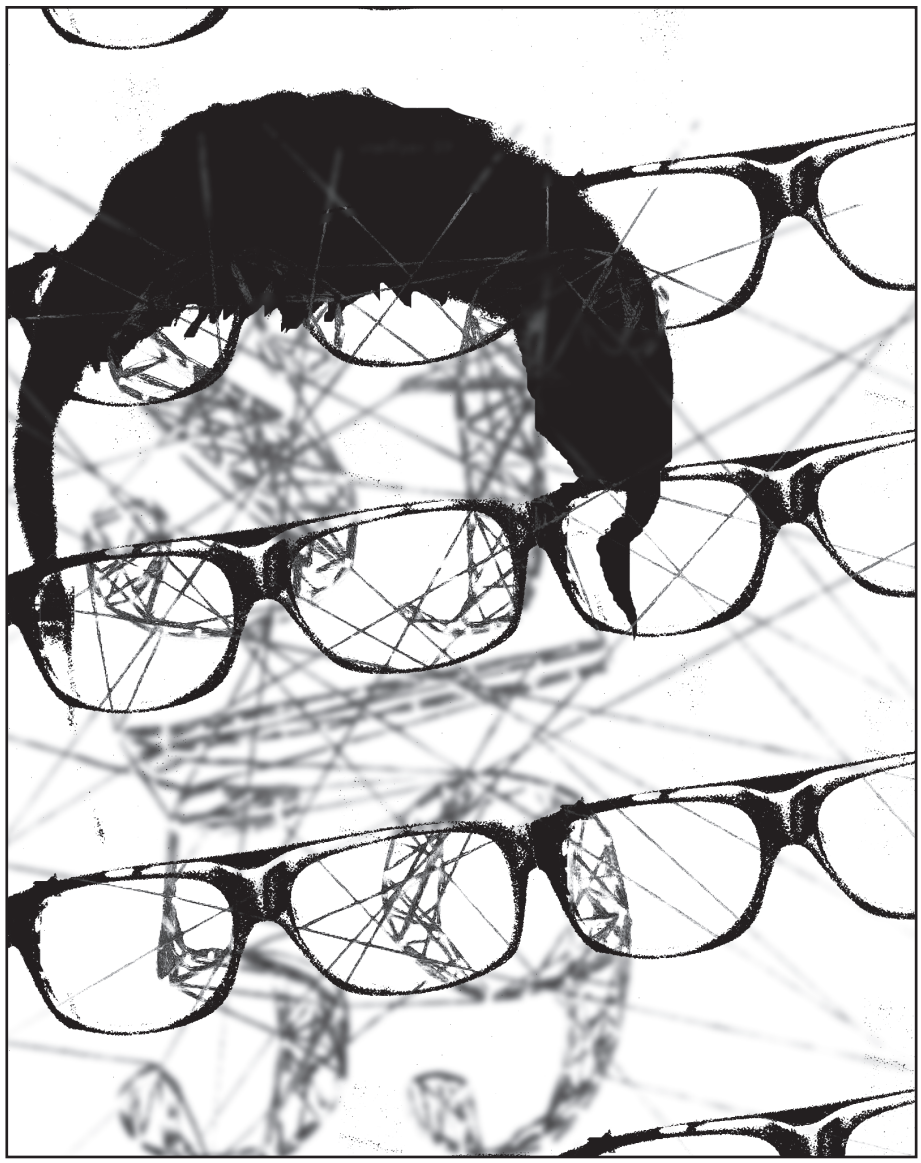


STARFLYER 59

MY ISLANDS

I'm stymied by the new Starflyer 59 record and I don't mind saying so 'cause it's no big whoop – by now Starflyer 59 have become a genre unto themselves: they're the only group of Smiths fans who don't sound like crappy Smiths fans.

Still, reviewing a SF59 album is as superfluous as reviewing *Scary Movie 5*; if the Wayans brothers are your thing, you're going to see the joint regardless of Ebert's angle. And what's so irritating about SF59 is there are no absolutes; they do great records if they're your thing, but it's not wrong if you think it's a somnambulant derivation. All the mightiest rock critics can muster is that *My Islands* is, like, real good. That is to say, "It is as if *My Islands* is a good record."

So pardon my solipsism, but *My Islands* is real good, because the music is real good. Is that enough for you? Does that make it a successful record, worth your babysittin' dough? I mean, they ain't the older brothers of Christian rock for no reason – they've shown us so many sparkles of bedrock inspiration over the years that they deserve our tougher standards.

On the whole, *My Islands* is more fun than what Starflyer has offered in the past. The drums are as crisp as ever and remain one of the best parts of their stalwart formula, and with what seems like a new philosophy of bass playing, they continue their progression out of the celestial grit into poppier grounds. "Mic the Mic" has a wicked swing and "Blondie (It's Alright)" will keep you dancing. But when Martin sings, "This is a crime, this is an emergency" in "Mic," I have trouble believing him; his singing is always too aloof to match the urgency of his music.

But SF59 on a bland day is better than a whole mess of bands on their best – that's how come they've earned our everlasting respect. And on *My Islands*, they do almost everything right. They just do it without the vigor they've shown

➡

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

on albums like *Gold* and *Americana* and *Old*. It makes me wonder if Jason Martin is more interested in compiling material for a future boxed set than in writing vital songs for today. It's going to be a great collection, at any rate, and while *My Islands* won't form the SF59 backbone, it won't break its back, either.. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] ADAM ROBINSON~~

SHOWBREAD
AGE OF REPTILES

This evolving band has now set a standard for themselves to follow. They've taken all that's cool about The White Stripes and Black Rebel Motorcycle Club and woven it into an album for the ages. "Naked Lunch" kicks off this party with a rompin' raw, garage-style number that's all distorted guitars and snotty, bratty Brit & NYC gang singing. Never have the words "You make me sick, oh so sick" ever sounded so much fun to sing. This great tune hands off to "Oh! Emetophobia!" and keeps the energy level high. It breaks down into a dirty, Southern, Maylene style bridge of "Oh yeah, your voice is like music / music to my ears…" Classic. "Your Owls Are Hooting" brings the low fuzzy guitars and bass a la BRMC, along with the haunting, mesmerizing droning vocals. It's not until the fifth track, with "Sing Me To Sleep," that the band slows down to catch its breath (qualifying as its only filler). The great news is that the back end of the album doesn't let down, but keeps bringing the rock. "The Jesus Lizard" and "Centipede Sisters" bounce and bop along at breakneck speed. The album ends with one of the most endearing songs in a while – the mercy prayer of the title track, which asks God for His blessing and forgiveness upon the crocodiles, cobras and all the snakes. It all ends with a roots rock clapping blues stomp that'd be at home on last year's *Howl* album or any of the old blues masters; stretching further still with a meandering worship acoustic extension. With Bible lessons, prayers, humor, and great stories embedded into these ten tunes, it adds richness and depth to songs that are built to stand up to multiple listens. How they'll live up to this benchmark on their next album is anyone's guess. It's hard not to love this one. ~~[SOLID STATE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

MEWITHOUTYOU
BROTHER, SISTER

Not content with being left in a corner collecting dust, mewithoutYou returns with something fresh again, expanding their creativeness to open their arms wide and garner an even broader spectrum of fans. Shedding even more of their post-hardcore/screamo skin than was seen in between *[A–>B] Life* and *Catch For Us The Foxes*, *Brother, Sister* finds mewithoutYou moving closer to what the world has deemed "indie rock." The band utilizes more instruments this time around, such as violins, horns, and added emphasis on the accordion. Also stressed on this disc are lead vocalist Aaron Weiss' singing and the chanting in the background. They even go as far as coupling lyrics from previous recording *[A–>B] Life* with new lyrics and a new tune, changing the meaning; before on *[A–>B] Life* the "little girl" was supposed to "remember," now she is to "forget." True to form, the lyrics ooze and drip with hope and spiritual depth. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] RAND RENFROW~~

GASOLINE HEART
YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE

I remember this one time a couple of years back, I walked into the smokey upper area of a venue in Atlanta called the Masquerade. The opening band was one I'd seen numerous times before and I wasn't expecting much variation – but on this night, their spark was just a little bit brighter. Guitars flew around in a fashion that channeled the spirit of Pete Townshend and the vocalist screamed fairly questionable lyrics at the top of his lungs while holding onto the microphone stand for dear life. Mindblowing. With shows like these, I was sure in my mind that The Kick was a band on the rise. Well, as is often the case in the rock and roll eco system, they disbanded – but some of the members carried on as Gasoline Heart. After picking up bassist John Fortson (a man who knows a little about rock and roll himself – and also moonlighted in an earlier incarnation of The Kick), the band was on their way. Gasoline Heart's debut, *You Know Who You Are,* shows the band's fascination with Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers come to full fruition, while spiking the energy with blasts straight out of the early Who's catalogue as well as Eric Burdon's Animals. "All The Way" remains from the Kick days, but the chorus is still as exhilarating and fist pumping as it was the first time around while "Cheers (Here's To Life)" is worth the price of the album on its own. This record could be described in one word: Anthemic. Pick this up, make your day plans now and watch this record slip into your permanent Summer rotation. ~~[MONO VS. STEREO] KRISS STRESS~~

LEIGH NASH
BLUE ON BLUE

It comes as no great shock that Leigh Nash's debut solo album, *Blue on Blue*, naturally extends the light pop sound Sixpence None the Richer first initiated way back when. Nash, after all, was the voice for that dearly departed band, and once again, her distinctively sweet and frail vocal instrument is a beautifully distinguishing feature, albeit this time in a solo context. There's so much déjà vu running through these grooves, it's almost as if Sixpence never actually left the building. Producer Pierre Marchand, who has previously worked with other smart and talented women like Sarah McLachlan, provides Nash with comfortable and unobtrusive sound banks to support the colorful musical webs she weaves. Nash's lyrics aren't overtly evangelical, although tracks like "My Idea of Heaven" and "Angel Tonight" incorporate spiritual terminology to bring out the utter godly goodness in happy relationships. "My Idea of Heaven," with its emotive vocal, is the best selection of all, because it brings to mind the irresistible hum-ability of Leslie (now Sam) Phillips' classic *The Turning* album. Sonically, *Blue on Blue* is a back-to-basics pop album. One hears plenty of piano, but very little of the groove-oriented rhythms we've come to expect from most modern pop. Nash is like a girl that chooses to wear an old dress her grandma made, instead of an outfit oozing with contemporary flash, because it just doesn't make any sense to mess with time-tested perfection. The title of *Blue on Blue* suggests an underlying sadness, although Nash never sings anything even close to the blues. Instead, if there are any blue tones at all, they're in clear blue skies for as far as the eye can see. ~~[ONE SON] DAN MACINTOSH~~

VARIOUS ARTISTS
MY OTHER BAND, VOL. ONE

It is a great idea to release a CD featuring an array of artists' music they have created in bands that they cannot devote their full time to. There are five bands, which have three

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Starflyer 59 *My Islands*	03	03
Showbread *Age Of Reptiles*	04*	
mewithoutYou *Brother, Sister*	04	04
Gasoline Heart *You Know Who You Are*	04	03*
Leigh Nash *Blue On Blue*	03*	03
Various Artists *My Other Band, Volume One*	03*	03*
Sleeping At Last *Keep No Score*	04*	04
Forever Changed *Chapters*	03	02*
FM Static *Critically Ashamed*	03	03
Jai Agnish *Mechanical Sunshine*	03	03*
Map *San Francisco In The 90's EP*	03	04
Jars Of Clay *Good Monster*	03*	04
Since Remembered *Coming Alive*	03*	02

songs each on the CD. However, it is a mystery as to why some of these artists, like Tyler Burkum, formerly of Audio Adrenaline, or Davy Baysinger and Jared Byers, formerly of Bleach, whose bands have been broken up for sometime, have only crafted three songs. From what I hear in this CD, all those fellows should definitely put out full-lengths. There is an obvious "indie" rock feel to all the songs, most of them being either piano, acoustic, or pop rock. All the bands offer different material than the bands they are/were in, with the exception of Dave Douglas, who pretty much creates music in the same vein of Relient K.
~~[MONO VS. STEREO] RAND RENFROW~~

SLEEPING AT LAST
KEEP NO SCORE

Even with only two full-length albums under their creative belt, the Chicago-based trio known as Sleeping At Last is becoming synonymous with sweeping rock anthems. Featuring brothers Chad and Ryan O'Neal, along with Dan Perdue, the band first became noticed when a demo and Billy Corgan crossed paths. Interscope Records soon entered the picture and the future was born. Their debut album, *Ghosts*, was a record that most artists can only dream of making. The piano-driven, atmospheric hooks displayed a musical artistry far beyond their years. However, things went awry and now the band finds themselves independent again. So be it. Whatever the label is, the music is still the same. Beautiful from the outset, songs such as opening track "Tension and Thrill" and "Careful Hands" feature the same string section as before. The difference here is a freedom to further explore new territory as well as permission to not have to chase the radio single. At the very least, *Keep No Score* is musical poetry in motion. ~~[INDIE] MATT CONNER~~

FOREVER CHANGED
CHAPTERS

In February of this year, Forever Changed made the tough decision to call it quits after playing together since 1999. Making the split on good terms, the band wanted to play out a few last shows (including Cornerstone Festival in Florida) and push the release of their second album *Chapters*. This follow up to *The Need To Feel Alive* gives fans a parting favor they can dance to. Fans of Jimmy Eat World and Mute Math will appreciate the punk-influenced upbeat tempo and smooth vocal stylings of singer Dan Cole. *Chapters* carries the same feel good melodies with conflicted lyrics throughout most of the album, while slowing things down toward the end with the softer "Cradle Eyes." ~~[FLOODGATE] KELLY BENSON~~

FM STATIC
CRITICALLY ASHAMED

We can all agree that vocalist Trevor McNevan has grown and honed his skills since his early rap-rock days on Thousand Foot Krutch's *Set It Off*. However, for his side project FM Static, there is very little maturing between 2003's *What Are You Waiting For?* and the band's new record, *Critically Ashamed*. I wouldn't have it any other way. All FM Static seems to want to do is have fun making music that the world can have fun listening to. The formula worked so well last time, so why not use it again? With infectious pop hooks, rhyming lyrics, and upbeat drums and guitars, FM Static triple dog dares fans to attempt not singing along or tapping their feet to the beat. Poking fun at the rock culture appears to be the main theme in several songs, which blend well with other slower, heartfelt songs, such as "Tonight." ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] RAND RENFROW~~

JAI AGNISH
MECHANICAL SUNSHINE

Like his friend and collaborator Sufjan Stevens, Jai Agnish is one of a growing group of Christian songwriters who find a popularity that transcends the church. Also like Stevens, Agnish manages to accomplish this by grounding his music in a trait that's universally human: sincerity. His latest recorded output, *Mechanical Sunshine*, isn't an album proper—collecting tracks recorded over a 5-year period—but it has the feel of someone who's figured out his musical talents, and who's simply interested in sharing them with others. His production is well-done, but simple, matching his lyrics and persona well. Joining a handful of tech-savvy modern artists, Agnish has found the perfect drum machine overlay for an acoustic base. Think Why? of Anticon, or a less tragic Pedro the Lion. This digitalia stamps his tunes with that hint of iciness that casts even a positive mantra into a darker light: "Don't let it get you down," he pleads on "Yellow Balloon," but it's as if he's repeating it to a door that's just been closed. That wistfulness burns through ballad after ballad, as Agnish strains to support his dreamy lyrics with shyly-offered melodies. ~~[CLERESTORYAV] JOEL CALAHAN~~

MAP
SAN FRANCISCO IN THE 90'S EP

When he's not hanging out with Starflyer 59, Guitarist Josh Dooley keeps himself busy exploring his own musical expression in Map. *San Francisco in the 90's* is the band's 6th release on Velvet Blue Music, and follows the path laid down on *Think Like An Owner*. A wonderful portrait of dreamy pop painted with a melancholic brush. Dooley's catchy guitar isn't as upfront as in previous recordings, but rather it makes room for the infectious key-based melodies provided by recent recruit Paul Akers. Another new member is drummer Trevor Monks, who helps round out the trio. While the band wears its SF59 influence on its sleeve (the EP was produced by Jason Martin), listeners will also be pleased to hear sounds reminiscent of The Autumns or The Cure. Dooley's (at times) understated vocals accompany the music perfectly – blending his lonely and wistful lyrics as if they are another instrument. Still considered an underground pop group, Map patiently waits for the masses to catch onto the soothing brilliance found on this EP. ~~[VELVET BLUE MUSIC] DOUG GIESBRECHT~~

JARS OF CLAY
GOOD MONSTERS

Jars of Clay are back. From Dan's vocals to the guitars and keyboards provided by Stephen, Matthew and Charlie you can hear a new found edge and sense of purpose on their 7th full release, *Good Monsters*. "Work" opens up the album with driving guitars and rhythms and has the melody to make it a surefire single. The biggest surprise, though, is "Dead Man (Carry Me)," with its Police-sounding guitars, and infectious chorus, it sounds like nothing this band has ever done. Another standout track is "Mirrors and Smoke," a duet with Leigh Nash of Sixpence None The Richer fame that has a groove that just won't quit. The lyrics are thought-provoking, personal, and profound. The track "There Is a River" talks about redemption, saying, "There is a river that washes you clean / There is a tree that marks the places you've been / Blood that was spilled, although not your own / For all of these things, love will atone." While on "Oh My God" we actually feel the despair as they sing, "Babies underneath their beds, in hospitals that cannot treat them / All the wounds that money causes, all the comforts of cathedrals / All the cries of thirsty children, this is our inheritance / All the rage of watching mothers, this is our greatest offense." It is good to see Jars of Clay not phoning it in at this point in their career. They've been around a long time now and delivered a number of great albums, yet *Good Monsters* finds the band at its peak creatively and artistically. Here's hoping there's even more to come, but it is hard to imagine it getting any better than this. ~~[ESSENTIAL] TONY SHORE~~

SINCE REMEMBERED
COMING ALIVE

The debut album from Since Remembered, the 12-tracked *Coming Alive*, pays tribute to the punk hardcore sounds of the early 80's with speedy drumbeats and loud vocals. It's apparent that the band has heard of Minor Threat and Stretch Arm Strong with their influences repeating throughout the album. Since Remembered lays out blueprints for each of their songs and sticks to the plan, but the album finds its voice with lyrics like, "Been pushed aside we won't compromise / Can't keep us, can't keep us down," on the song "Can't Keep Us Down." In a world of changing hardcore music, longtime 'core fans will appreciate this throwback to simpler times. ~~[BLOOD & INK] KELLY BENSON~~

DECEMBERADIO

S/T

"My life's like an eight-track," lead singer Josh Reedy proclaims in "Love Found Me," my favorite song on DecembeRadio's self-titled album. And this band definitely brings back the vintage sounds of bands that may have first been on eight-tracks. This CD could easily share shelf space with artists like Lynyrd Skynyrd, or contemporaries, Third Day and Day of Fire. Josh Reedy, Brian Bunn (lead guitar and vocals), Eric Miker (guitar and vocals), and Boone Daughdrill (drums), are good at what they do and are foremost, straight Southern rock, tinged with a little country and a little blues. They sing lyrics filled with enough joy and praise to get your feet stomping. While DecembeRadio formed in 1998, this is their first release on a record label, which happens to be upstart label Slanted Records. With their sound these boys are definitely poised to rock Christian radio stations everywhere. ~~[SLANTED] RAND RENFROW~~

OF THE SON

AT WAR

I'm going to say something bold. It's going to make me sound like a jerk. Can you handle it? Are you ready? Okay. I don't like the vocalist for Of The Son's singing. This was almost enough to make me dismiss this band, but a closer listen revealed several redeeming qualities. The most obvious would be that he really doesn't sing that much and his guttural growl heals all previous inner ear wounds. The second is the mastered hardcore/metal sound that is represented in seven "circle up the pit" tracks, three of which are from live performances, that prove Of The Son can hold their own in a studio as well as in a live setting. Creating their own genre of "praise-core," this band pushes their way into the scene with their first album by demonstrating that praising God isn't just reserved for pipe organs and church choirs. And that is something I can really appreciate. ~~[HARVEST EARTH] KELLY BENSON~~

THE PIT THAT BECAME A TOWER

THE PINEAPPLE FIELDS

Jerusalem, Israel's The Pit that Became a Tower play acoustic-based tunes, with throaty vocals, sparse production, and limited instrumentation. Upon my initial absorption, I described the disc as packed with organic strangeness, instrumentally-speaking; more unusual than the syrupy liquids that filled the shelves of the health food store I frequented as a young child. Upon my second listen, however, the aural snapshot became one of normalcy. The 11 tracks offered here range from songs with studio sonics, to rough and tumble recordings, and even a humorous short interlude. Group leader Adam Rosenfeld is able to open his mouth and release words like: "If I were strong like Lou Ferrigno and the champ at all Nintendo, what is it that makes me so, so sad?" while maintaining an air of seriousness. In general, the lyrics ebb and flow throughout the songs, painted with plenty of Western culture tidbits. Ultimately, the words concentrate on the provision, power, grace and mercy the Lord provides; pointing to Him as the Source. Rosenfeld's lyrical conscience and sense of conviction pull gently, but successfully, at the heartstrings when needed. This is for those music mavens seeking something a bit off-kilter, stripped down, and non-commercial. If the ears are seeking something swimming with melody and slicker production, pick up a Bill Mallonee solo record. If the musical taste buds are yearning for something from the mysterious syrup-filled bottles of the health food stores of yesteryear, buy a Tom Waits collection. ~~[MEN OF ISRAEL] CHRIS CALLAWAY~~

WITH BLOOD COMES CLEANSING

GOLGOTHA

Not too many things are brought to mind when one ponders the word "Golgotha." Mostly the only word that surfaces is "skull." Admittedly, skulls are one of the main things conjured in the mind by listening to *Golgotha*, the band With Blood Comes Cleansing's debut on Blood & Ink Records, but what one may not expect from a CD with such a title, or the average listener may not hear, is that the album's lyrics speak of hope, love, praise and worship, and battles within oneself. It doesn't seem as though With Blood Comes Cleansing are trying to break molds or transcend any genres; instead they deliver their message with grade A death metal, complete with rapid guitar shredding, breakdowns galore and double-kick drums. Vocalist Michael Sasser does a swell job of transitioning between spine-tingling, low growls and high screeching, but in some cases sounds like squealing during some high parts. What these guys really do well is the amazing gang vocals present on several tracks, that sneak up and then erupt, taking a hold of your body like only With Blood Comes Cleansing could. ~~[BLOOD & INK] RAND RENFROW~~

VARIOUS ARTISTS

FREAKED!

If "By God's design, we're all a skin kaleidoscope," then by Gotee Record's design, *Freaked!* is a musical kaleidoscope swirling genres together to perfectly pay tribute to a group that consistently broke the molds of Christian music. This diverse compilation includes everything from The Showdown covering "So Help Me God," to the humorous "Jesus Freak Reprise" as sung by John Reuben and the Gotee Choir. While the artists don't stray too far from the original recordings, their individual styles shine through to create an album that covers all musical bases. An added bonus is an interlude by Toby Mac's assistant, "Mr. Tobin." While jazzy music plays in the background, he recounts how he met Toby and moved into the Gotee studio while working for him. It's these little bonuses and a white, lazar cut jacket that slips over the case that makes *Freaked!* the perfect keepsake for any dcTalk fan. ~~[GOTEE] KELLY BENSON~~

SARAH KELLY

WHERE THE PAST MEETS TODAY

The first time I heard Sarah Kelly sing, I thought Janis Joplin had returned from the dead and converted to Christianity. With this sophomore album, Sarah returns with even more grit, even more passion and with way more in-your-face vocals. Sarah's debut album, *Take Me Away* was a praise and worship album. This one is not. Sarah takes a huge step away from worship leading to tackle being an "artist" with her newest release, *Where the Past Meets Today*. This album is straight up Sarah with no added bells or whistles. Although I was blown away by Sarah's amazing voice, overall this album fell flat for me. I was hoping for better songwriting and the catchy hooks that I was used to hearing from her. There were a couple of songs that grabbed my attention, but overall I was bored fairly easily. Nonetheless Sarah Kelly is a much needed unique voice in the Christian music scene and has yet again set herself apart with this honest and raw album. ~~[GOTEE] HEATHER REYNOLDS~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Decemberadio *S/T*	03	02
Of The Son *At War*	02*	02
The Pit That Became A... *The Pineapple Fields*	02*	02
With Blood Comes... *Golgotha*	03	03
Various Artists *Freaked!*	02	03
Sarah Kelly *Where The Past Meets Today*	03	02
A Company Of Heroes *S/T*	03	03*
Your Eyes My Dreams *Weapons Are Useless*	03	02*
The Turning *Learning To Lose*	02*	03
Deas Vail *Collapse EP*	03*	03*
Fireflight *The Healing Of Harms*	03	02
Falling Into Place *Every Grave Is A Garden*	02	03
History Invades *In Vision Vanish Invisible*	03	03*

16 HORSEPOWER
LIVE (DVD)
A second 16 Horsepower double-DVD in two years? If that seems a little much from the late Americana/post-punk trio, distinctions aplenty commend *Live*. Primarily, it's the copious concert footage, culled from engagingly lit outdoor and indoor dates and a German TV show. Throughout, steely-eyed bandleader David Eugene Edwards cracks not a smile as he sings and plays banjo, bandoleon and various guitars. Admittedly, 16Hp's yearning, soaring, often self-flagellating brand of mutant country rock and the brimstone singing Christianity of Edwards' lyrics don't leave much room for yuks. That earnestness, however, provided much of the group's appeal: a cheese factor of nil. Still, in the road and rehersal clips on the second disc, Edwards' lips upturn in a grin or three. Keep an ear out for an f-bomb and another (contextually sensical?) cuss in the set from the Fatherland's Rockpalst show, but otherwise, it's a memorable DVD for 16 Hp fans, especially those who never caught them in the flesh. [ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES] JAMIE LEE RAKE

A COMPANY OF HEROES
S/T
Don't let this self-titled album's cover with a serene daisy photo self adhered with four pieces of white tape fool you. A Company of Heroes is anything but serene. This album is twenty minutes of no mercy spastic noise that hits fast and hard. [GUEVARA ENTERTAINMENT] KELLY BENSON

THE 77'S
SEVENTY-SEVENS (DVD)
This two-DVD set is the visual equivalent to The 77's *123* box set from a while back. It has almost everything any self-respecting 77's fan needs to see. Disc 1 collects the Sacramento band's music videos, which range from the Pat Boone-introduced "A Different Kind Of Light," to "Snake," which might even spook snake guy Alice Cooper. The second disc is all live footage. Chances are your favorite 77's song is rendered here somewhere. The band is caught a full five times at its original home church, Warehouse Ministries, and also in couple of different Cornerstone appearances. The best footage of all was taken at "Rock of Love" in California, because it features relative obscurities like "Miserable" and "Come And Gone" performed passionately. Granted, we're still waiting impatiently for an intentional live DVD from Mike Roe and the boys. But this will have to do – and it usually does quite well – for now. [LO-FIDELITY] DAN MACINTOSH

YOUR EYES MY DREAMS
WEAPONS ARE USELESS
Admitting to having a few lineup changes since being signed to Indianola Records in August of 2005, Your Eyes My Dreams have managed to maintain a cohesive sound on their debut record, *Weapons Are Useless*. This Delaware based hardcore band references metal guitar riffs and melodic breakdowns, while a machine gun-like double kick pedal keeps sporadic time. Biblical references coat deep-throat lyrics, like the Jeremiah 29:11 inspired, "When The Going Gets Rough…" which promises, "I have a plan for your life / To prosper, not to harm / Don't back down now / Have faith in yourself / I will never leave you if you never leave me." Wearing beliefs like a badge, Your Eyes My Dreams successfully turns out hardcore with a mission. [INDIANOLA] KELLY BENSON

THE TURNING
LEARNING TO LOSE
Working with producer Nathan Dantzler (Kids in the Way), new modern rock act The Turning will cause just that, as fans and critics alike are bound to turn their heads wondering at the source of the radio-friendly pop/rock sound. The Turning are the most recent release from the RKT label, a new subsidiary of Rocketown Records, and labelmates with newcomers Hyperstatic Union, although The Turning is definitely the more promising of the two. Coming together in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the band formed after playing in various worship bands and began writing together. Frontman Jacob McGinnis joined soon thereafter and the infectious melodies were born. Lead single "Out Of My Hands" follows the formula carefully, building in all the right places. "Never Again" is the first song on *Learning To Lose* and sets the tone well for an album full of rising vocals and guitar riffs made for the masses to enjoy. "Change" is another destined-for-radio track that showcases McGinnis as the ideal vocalist doing all things right, including hitting a memorable falsetto while the anthems keep churning. While there is nothing that pushes the envelope here, The Turning still provide plenty to enjoy. [RKT] MATT CONNER

DEAS VAIL
COLLAPSE EP
This summer, newcomers Deas Vail threw out a twenty-minute teaser for present and future fans with the release of their EP *Collapse*. The EP begins with "This Place is Painted Red," which features Kelsey Harelson's ratatat drums conversing with Andy Moore's slurred speech guitar before vocalist Wes Blaylock interrupts with liquid vocals. Fingers tickle piano keys into chords while bows drag across strings making this song a powerful opener to the album. This energetic instrumental layering weaves throughout the last four songs as the classically trained Blaylock jumps from a crooning tenor to a smooth falsetto reminiscent of Mae singer Dave Elkins. The piano driven "Standing Still" closes out the album encouraging listeners, "Don't give up now, no / Don't throw your heart away." Boasting over 3,000 friends on myspace and gigs at Cornerstone Festival, Deas Vail has already begun to conjure up a solid fan base. If this five-song sample is any indication of what's to come, Deas Vail will have no problem positively representing the label Brave New World with the release of their first full length, *All the Houses Look the Same*. [BRAVE NEW WORLD] KELLY BENSON

FIREFLIGHT
THE HEALING OF HARMS
The good news is that there is potential here. That said, the attempts to reach that level come up short for new Flicker Records act Fireflight. With their debut, *The Healing of Harms*, the band endeavors to bring a vast array of styles into one sonically cohesive unit. Screamo, metal, emo, and modern rock elements are found throughout the album and actually come together in several tracks. Vocalist Dawn Richardson tries her best to be the tie that binds, but it's too much for even her stellar voice to handle. Songs such as "You Decide" and "Myself" reach for achievements much bigger than the band is able to undertake and ultimately the structure they are building falls under its own weight. For example, on the former, the song seems to settle into a solid radio-rock groove, but then finds itself musically schizophrenic when the screaming seems to come from nowhere. The good news is that the pieces are here if Fireflight is given the chance to mature and grow with each album. [FLICKER] MATT CONNER

FALLING INTO PLACE
EVERY GRAVE IS A GARDEN
With music almost as beautiful as the members in the band, *Every Grave Is A Garden* introduces Falling Into Place with its September release. These pretty boys are not afraid to bring the rock as they fuse high-energy pop with hardcore screams and heavy guitars for a schizophrenic sound that will make you want to bob your head while throwin' punches. [WORD OF MOUTH] KELLY BENSON

HISTORY INVADES
IN VISION VANISH INVISIBLE
The first track on *In Vision Vanish Invisible* persistently asks the question, "What do you want?" What do I want? I wanna dance to a band that puts Shrinky Dinks and vellum appliqués on their album covers and masters an electric sound without the raver aftertaste. With elements of The Faint and Moving Units, History Invades takes visual and music art to another level. [GUEVARA ENTERTAINMENT] KELLY BENSON

ARMA SECRETA
A CENTURY'S REMAINS

Arma Secreta used a "secreta" formula on their new release, *A Century's Remains*, composed of 2 cups of funky guitar and bass riffs, 1 cup of obnoxious drumming, 2 tablespoons of hushed, lofty vocals, and a teaspoon of keys to create a sonic dream. As unappealing as this description may sound, be reassured their music is quite the opposite. Arma Secreta's formula mixes well, and the dual vocals from the only two members, Christopher Wark (guitar, bass, keys, and iron fist) and Bradley Bean (drum kit, keys, and heartburn), under a bed of layered guitar and bass had me unconsciously tapping my feet and shaking my hips. Needless to say, their sound is definitely different than most and definitely gets me moving. Many of the lyrics and arrangements sound serious, yet Arma Secreta show they still have a humorous side, with songs like "Little Snow Ninja" and the awesome band photo. ~~[RTHMTC] RAND RENFROW~~

CALL TO PRESERVE
UNSINKABLE

Strike First Records has struck again with Call to Preserve! These guys are from the thriving Florida hardcore scene and bring a brand of old school Hardcore with a dash of metal. I love the gang vocals and the lyrics are very singable. The lyrics are focused on standing firm for Christ in a world full of evil. The energy just pours forth from this album to a point where I found myself not only playing air guitar, but headbanging to the breakdowns as well. The problem was that I was driving at the time. The hardcore vocals were pure. I've heard many hardcore vocalists where I would get bored after a few songs. Not the case here! If you like Throwdown and Bury Your Dead, you will like CTP. The album is called *Unsinkable* and it lives up to its name. The band is Call to Preserve and they will. ~~[STRIKE FIRST] JAMIE BUCHANAN~~

GLASS CASKET
DESPERATE MAN'S DIARY

North Carolina proves to be to another fine breeding ground of intense metalcore by delivering Winston-Salem's Glass Casket. By sharing two members from Between The Buried And Me (guitarist Dusty Waring and drummer Blake Richards), they erupt an onslaught of continuous technicality, consisting of tremendous shreds, roaring vocals, and elongated solos for their sophomore release, *Desperate Man's Diary*. But it's vocalist Adam Cody's lyrics – written to cope over his sister's suicide – that solidify the album's ambience as a wretched walk through a haunted house. ~~[ABACUS] DAN FRAZIER~~

CUE THE DOVES
ARCHITECTURES OF THE ATMOSPHERE

Twin Cities based Cue The Doves should gather some attributable recognition as Jon Berndtson (the vocalist/bassist from the dearly missed The Beautiful Mistake)'s new band. But anyone expecting similar emotionally compulsive post-something rock, will be deeply disappointed or confused. As if they purposely de-evolved their sound and were forced to only listen to radio rock hits from the mid-90s, this quintet fails to deliver anything innovative or appealing. Attempts at atmospheric elements (like Dredg) and intense alternating screams and croons (like TBM) are modest efforts, but the slow bombastic guitar riffs hinder any hope by digging at a style that should simply remain buried. ~~[DEAD LETTER] DAN FRAZIER~~

DEMISE OF EROS
NEITHER STORM NOR QUAKE NOR FIRE

Hold on tight – really tight. Pittsburgh's Demise Of Eros is going on a breakneck metalcore ride and you better be ready when they jerk on your hand to come along. Even before the safety harness can be double checked, this quintet shreds pulsating guitar lines over thunderous drums. Occasionally vocalist Darren Belajac will belt out a smoother chorus melody to contradict his rougher growl or the instruments will almost halt to a short serenity. But it's during this time that you should put you hands on your knees and attempt to catch your breath. You'll soon need it again. ~~[STRIKE FIRST] DAN FRAZIER~~

CIRCLESLIDE
UNCOMMON DAYS

Declaring that the modern pop music market is oversaturated would be an understatement, to say the least. Because of this, an artist or band becomes known generally in one of two ways. Either the band has a sound that is infectious or good enough to stand out or they rely on a gimmick or story that sets them apart. Circleslide has both going for them. The moniker Circleslide comes from a song by the legendary band The Choir. Ironically, it is with former Choir members Derri Daugherty and Steve Hindalong that the band was able to write and produce with. Fortunately, what they produce is fantastic pop sensibilities. Melodies are rarely this strong on a debut album, especially those found in the title track, "Uncommon Days." Gabe Martinez resonates with his raspy voice while the rest of the band soars with Euro-rock distinctiveness. "Home" finds Martinez moving to new heights as the anthem longs for a place of belonging. With *Uncommon Days*, Circleslide definitely creates what it takes to stand out. ~~[CENTRICITY] MATT CONNER~~

KRYSTAL MEYERS
DYING FOR A HEART

An edgy imaged late-teen girl with a voice or guitar is nothing new. In fact, by now, it should be considered redundant. First came the white tank top and tie combo clad Canadian who chased "Sk8er Bois." Then came the acid refluxing ex-debutante Texan who thought she could escape her older sister's shadow by simply donning black. Thanks to greedy record label executives, countless other clones spawn and spontaneously combust on a daily basis. But what manages to separate the genuine from the plastics is the ability to write your own music. Tennessee's Krystal Meyers delivers her anticipated debut follow up, *Dying For A Heart*, without any apologies for catchy upbeat guitar hooks and soaring vocals. While the intensity may have turned clockwise one notch, a broader pop rock appeal still laminates every track. Littered between every chorus are tales of growing maturity while sustaining a positively focused life. And yes, she's already huge in Japan. Go ahead and dare to brush her off, but don't be startled when she soon pops back in your face. ~~[ESSENTIAL] DAN FRAZIER~~

DROP DEAD, GORGEOUS
IN VOGUE

New label, new band, low expectations... Mistake! This screaming outfit throws in all the cacophony any 'core fan could crave, with those blip counter-notes and speed drumming, and blood-curdling throat emaciating screams. This is for-real muscle-tearing stuff. The dynamics swing large, with split-second rests and piano at times (to which in the liner notes Aaron

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Arma Secreta *A Century's Remains*	03	04
Call To Preserve *Unsinkable*	03	03
Glass Casket *Desperate Man's Diary*	03*	03
Cue The Doves *Architectures Of The Atmosphere*	02*	02*
Demise Of Eros *Neither Storm Nor Quake Nor Fire*	03*	03*
Circleslide *Uncommon Days*	02*	03*
Krystal Meyers *Dying For A Heart*	03	04
Drop Dead, Gorgeous *In Vogue*	04	
The Accident Experiment *United We Fear*	03*	04*
Across Five Aprils *Collapse*	03*	04
Glenn Kaiser *Bound For Glory*	02*	03
The Lost Dogs *The Lost Cabin And The Mystery Trees*	04	04
Unwed Sailor *Circles*	04	02
Jesse Daniels *S/T*	02*	03

THE ACCIDENT EXPERIMENT

UNITED WE FEAR

One of the best albums of 2003 that most have never heard, the *Arena* EP, by The Accident Experiment introduced the world to former P.O.D. guitarist Marcos Curiel's new full-time band. Originally intended as a side project, AxE (as they're known by fans) took over as his main band when he was either forced out of P.O.D. or left of his own accord. Depends on who you ask. Either way the point of contention was this new endeavor with Ernie Longoria (drums) and Tony Delocht (bass), both formerly of San Diego's Sprung Monkey. Pete Stewart, formerly of Christian grungemeisters Grammatrain, stepped in on vocals. And for this the hard rock world was a better place. Three years later we have the full-length debut, *United We Fear*. Produced by Curiel, the overall sound is hard rock. Rather than riffs and power chords, Marcos' trademark effects laden guitar parts take center stage. Longoria and Delocht form a rhythm section that is one of the most intricate and solid you're likely to hear in this genre. No rap or reggae ala P.O.D. to speak of, Stewart's momentous and melodic vocals are a definite highlight. While their past bands had a decidedly Christian message, Curiel and Stewart have essentially turned their backs on the faith they once had. "Holy Magic Man" and "Bleed This" will probably catch their Christian listeners by surprise. And even though the lyrical subject matter isn't all rosy, it's also not chock full of absolute negativity. Just like *Arena* before it, *United We Fear* is likely to earn a spot on my year end favorites list. The Accident Experiment certainly lives up to the hype of the members' past pedigrees, but I dare say this actually surpasses them. [ROCK RIDGE MUSIC] CHAD OLSON

ACROSS FIVE APRILS

COLLAPSE

Across Five Aprils is back with a new CD, *Collapse*, after two years and a lead singer change. New vocalist Brandon Mullins brings to the table different and unique screaming, and maybe a new outlook for the band. In a recent email from Mullins, he said that A5A have never claimed to be a Christian band, but still occasionally play in churches. Also added are plenty more gang vocals, increased hardcore flavor, and more breakdowns, producing a sound like a cross between Kids In The Way, Comeback Kid, and Underoath. [INDIANOLA] RAND RENFROW

thanks God for "blessing me with long piano fingers and amazing talents"...). Nice. After about 20 minutes of silence, the hidden track at the end blasts in, which ends with someone screaming at a female dog or something. ~~[RISE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

GLENN KAISER

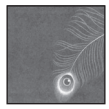
BOUND FOR GLORY

Glenn Kaiser, who began his Christian music career as the firebrand leader of the Resurrection Band, is now an elder statesman in the community. In contrast to the baby held aloft on the cover to his new *Bound For Glory* disc, the real Kaiser is a gray-bearded one, with little hair on top, as pictured on the package's back side. He's earned the right to do just about anything he pleases these days, and this disc finds him mixing his consistent love for the blues, with an equal fervor for old hymns. The release opens with the rumbling shout "God's Not Dead," but Kaiser has more on his mind than the gospel blues. He later sings a quietly beautiful "Softly and Tenderly," then an acoustic guitar-only "All Hail The Power," and closes theologically with "Doxology," which continues the project's partially unplugged hymnal feel. Throughout the recording, Kaiser's daughter, Ami Moss, adds plenty of feminine vocal beauty to Glenn's male toughness. As a whole, it'd be a lie to say *Bound For Glory* holds together particularly well; there's just too many different styles thrown together into the same pot. But in Kaiser's mind, the formal hymns of Martin Luther and the Negro spirituals of more recent history are all woven from the same thread: all are sincere expressions of true Christian faith. ~~[GRRR] DAN MACINTOSH~~

THE LOST DOGS

THE LOST CABIN AND THE MYSTERY TREES

Our family has an old dog. He limps a bit, he doesn't hear too well, and he quite frankly smells bad most of the time. Such negative characteristics are true of most aging canines, like our dear little Sparky, but they certainly don't apply to the Lost Dogs. Terry Taylor, Mike Roe, Derri Daugherty and now Steve Hindalong are sounding better and better all the time. Highlights on this latest effort include the noisy garage rock of "Get Me Ready," the epic story "Only One Bum In Corona Del Mar," and the Dogs' gut-level take on WWJD with "That's Where Jesus Is." On many recent Dogs recordings, Taylor wrote almost all of the songs. And while he still provides the lion's share of new material with *Lost Cabin*, it's a special treat to find pen labor from a few of the other talented "cats" in the band. For instance, Daugherty co-wrote the beautiful country weeper "Whispering Memories" with Hindalong, and sings it with pure, unrestrained heart. Mike Roe, who is referred to by his nickname "Dr. Love" in Daugherty/Hindalong's "Burn It Up," also performs his own "One More Day." Why would you ever want to teach these Dogs new tricks? They've perfected and personalized the old ones so well. ~~[FOOLS OF THE WORLD] DAN MACINTOSH~~



UNWED SAILOR

CIRCLES

(Burnt Toast Vinyl)

The richly adored *Marionette & the Music Box*, the last Unwed Sailor release, sprawled with seventeen tracks; this one is not even seventeen minutes long, cut into two segments. And yet that barely over a quarter hour territory of time, no matter how smaller a canvas, rewards as much repeated listening as the previous long player. Though *Marionette* had a fascinating, majestic instrumental story with multi-textural weavings to reflect its much admired and even duplicated illustrated packaging, *Circles* is small and dark and pretty, reflecting its strangely alien plant dim on the cover of the digipak. "Circles 1: Mist" glides along with a one note bass-like thrum and a crisp conga slap; around the six and a half minute mark guitar distortion threatens to swell and take over, but only barely ever seems to scrape an actual chord. A minute later it does, but the tension in your mind before descent is where the power lies. The fingers of Unwed Sailors' sound gently tickle your temples, the instrumentation not at all exotic, but the sounds taken from these instruments by Johnathan Ford, Daniel Burton, Phillip Blackwell, and Matt Griffin are. The actual instruments the artists used are not assigned in the restrained packaging. 'Restraint' is a great word for almost the whole of "Mist," until its final shimmers. Then, on "Circles 2: Mesa," quiet keyboards become a bit more pronounced, still low behind whatever drama that band is placing in our minds – to me, it all sounds like Creation. It's a sweet, near-silent chaos that at 1:40 of this second movement becomes an actual heart beat, and then a ricocheting drum pattern as the miracle of life begins. Between being and essence, or mist and mesa, Unwed Sailor discover salvation in music again, the way Bach and Mozart and Shostakovich had. For those that yearn for more than just the pleadings and questions brought to mind by the human voice, their music will reflect blessing. ~~[BURNT TOAST VINYL] CHRIS ESTEY~~

JESSE DANIELS

S/T

If you are looking for bright "pop-rock" that is radio-friendly and appeals to the masses, you are most likely going to enjoy Jessie Daniels. This teenager from New York has done a good job at what she has set out to do. Clean production and a good band make it easy to listen to and one could imagine she will do quite well on radio. Jesse Daniels could easily rival several of the young female pop-singers that are doing so well (and have done well) in the general market. Daniels is given credit for helping write most of the songs on the album and her intentions behind each song are clear to the audience. The lyrics are uplifting and genuine. The disc is catchy and is a wonderful first effort. ~~[MIDAS] BONNIE MASRI~~

NEVERTHELESS
LIVE LIKE WE'RE ALIVE

Indie pop/rock band Nevertheless will be making headway in the music industry with their first full length, *Live Like We're Alive,* and their first single, "The Real." This ten-song album is 32 minutes of catchy guitar riffs and toe-tapping drum beats reminiscent of The Juliana Theory and Further Seems Forever. Lyrics by Joshua Pearson (vocals/acoustic guitar) and AJ Cheek (guitar/background vocals) narrate catchy songs that could be mistaken for the usual: "she left me and now all I do is eat cookie dough and watch TV" love songs, but a closer listen will show they reach deep into the heart of a spiritual love and pull out real truth and healing. On "Lover" Pearson sings, "You can find me here with my head against the wall, lost in my regrets and every time I fall / you catch me in your hands / You circle me like a wedding band." Even if you haven't been able to dip your toes into the indie pop/rock pool, you might still be able to appreciate the honesty that Nevertheless fills it with. [FLICKER] KELLY BENSON

STELLAR KART
CAN'T STAND SITTING DOWN

The secret to a good diet is finding good low-fat food that tastes almost as delicious and rich as its unhealthy counterpart. From the sound of *Can't Stand Sitting Down*, the sophomore effort from Stellar Kart, the same appears to be true for Christian music. While the band doesn't exactly score one for originality, it does satisfy your sweet tooth for power pop hard candy with a batch of uplifting power chord anthems. With the youth of Panic! At the Disco, the adrenaline of Yellowcard, the soft caress of Relient K and Hawk Nelson and the soaring choruses of Armor for Sleep and Hellogoodbye, Stellar Kart could fit in easily at the *Warped Tour*. What separates the band from others is its complete devotion to creating wholesome music. Their songs offer hope ("Me and Jesus," "Hold On," "Angels in Chorus") through the grace and mercy of Jesus, while others contemplate the struggles of being a normal teenager ("Procrastinating," "Only Wanted"). [WORD] AUSTIN POWELL

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA
DEAR LOVE: A BEAUTIFUL DISCORD

Newly signed to Rise Records and just over a year old, this baby is already cutting teeth and growing fast. The Devil Wears Prada's mature hardcore/metal sound fills in all the gaps in a scene where many bands are lacking certain components. Sweetly sung vocals over deep growls, staccato synth accents, complicated breakdowns and tempo changes that turn on a dime create something that won't fade into white noise. Beginning with guitars mimicking piano scales on "Gauntlet Of Solitude" and ending with the beautifully epic "Salvation," *Dear Love: A Beautiful Discord* will hit the ground running. [RISE] KELLY BENSON

KISSING COUSINS
EP2

Comprised of 4 girls from California this band with their second EP (4 songs) on Velvet Blue puts forth a good showing. The girls prove they can live up to their self-titled "indie" and "garage" style labels. If you are into female garage rock, think Mirah, maybe a little tiny bit of Azure Ray and Cat Power. Perhaps. Pianos, flutes, lots of noise, and imperfections are the trademarks of this EP along with a darker sound. The first song, "Deadline," is catchy without being overdone, showcasing some nice vocals. The next song in the line up ("Live Without You") is a "noisy" one and nicely is followed by a bright song in "Act of Birth," filled with vocals that border on sweet and lots of piano. The album is closed with an entirely different sound, with "Let You Down." Their production is lo-fi and seems fitting for what they intend musically, making an altogether decent EP. [VELVET BLUE MUSIC] BONNIE MASRI

MELK THE G6-49
MENE MENE TEKEL PARSIN

The noisemakers are back with another party. They've followed up *Glossolalia* with the words of God written by a human hand on the plaster wall of a royal palace. The album is thusly broken up into three movements: "Mene," "Tekel," and "Peres." The interpretation of this message got Daniel promoted to third in the kingdom; so perhaps this album will get these guys in the upper echelon's of noise art. Perhaps not, but noise galore – lots of cymbals, noise, and various percussion bring the art in these instrumental movements, throbbing and offering a nice chaotic break occasionally. I like it, but it's an acquired taste, for sure. [JOYFUL NOISE] DOUG VAN PELT

CATHERINE
S/T

There are so many brutal and metallic hardcore bands these days, that some people and critics get bored or downright picky. Not me. I say, "Bring it on!" If you can pummel me senseless and make me move all over, you've won my heart. Sure, it takes an over-the-top gang chorus to push me over the edge and keep me coming back, but for temporary ecstacy, bring me Catherine and insanely fast 'n' grooving hardcore bands like them. I may be simple, but I will windmill kick you in the face. This drummer really pounds the skins. When he yells, "Go!" Well, you know the rest. [RISE] KERN COUNTY KID, THE

THE GENTLEMAN HOMICIDE
UNDERSTANDING THE WORDS WE SPEAK

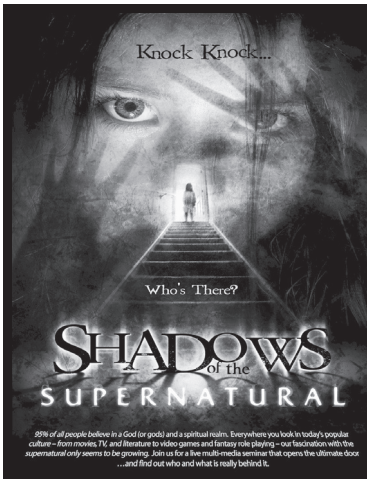
Straight out of Amarillo, Texas comes some music you can pump your fist to. With their new album, *Understanding the Words We Speak*, The Gentleman Homicide nestle themselves somewhere in between hardcore and metal, which this band seems to be made for. What really shines on this album is the instrumentation and structures of songs, which could easily stand by themselves without vocals. The Gentleman Homicide are fast, I will give them that, as their ten songs clock in at barely over 20 minutes. The only thing that may need some varying is the monotone vocals that sometimes wear on you. [BLOOD & INK] RAND RENFROW

THORN VS. SIDE
ARSON

With lyrics inspired by and quoted from famous literary works and authors, from Josh Milton's *Paradise Lost* to Lady Macbeth to the Bible, Thorn vs Side have crafted a great debut EP. Ex-members from the bands Society's Finest, (In Theory), and Fontane have joined together to create toe tappin' pop-rock similar to Relient K, but with just a touch of punk, and with less wit and more insight. Hailing from Dallas, Texas and on the unknown label Mookie Dog based in San Antonio, few people have probably heard of this gem, but I doubt it will stay that way. [MOOKIE DOG] RAND RENFROW

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Nevertheless *Live Like We're Alive*	03	03
Stellar Kart *Can't Stand Sitting Down*	03	02*
The Devil Wears Prada *Dear Love: A Beautiful Discord*	03*	04
Kissing Cousins *EP2*	03	02*
Melk The G6-49 *Mene Mene Tekel Parsin*	02	
Catherine *S/T*	03	
The Gentleman Homicide *Understanding The Words We Speak*	03	02*
Thorn Vs. Side *Arson*	03	03



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"It was intense. That's all I can say. It was real. It made me think about things I haven't thought about in some time." Ben Thomas; High School and College Minister; Wheatland Salem United Methodist Church, Naperville IL

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"John Thompson is one of the most prolific and media savvy authors and speakers in the country. His experience as a publisher, author, musician, consultant, and cultural critic, gives him the hands-on knowledge of current societal trends, coupled with a keen biblical sense as to how it all fits into the Christian story. No one within in ear-shot is ever disappointed when John delivers his street smart biblical approach to a wide range of subjects: including the fascination with the supernatural and cultural icons and their impact on spirituality. He will always bring it home with truth and grace." David Bunker; Adjunct Professor; Wheaton Music Conservatory; Wheaton College

"As if Halloween night itself wasn't enough to get people thinking about the other-worldly, John J. Thompson's presentation of Shadows of the Supernatural nailed it home with an intense and mind-stirring dose of spiritual reality. A couple hundred people flocked to our large auditorium, many of them decked out in their scariest costumes. By the time they left, the truth of the gospel had been unmasked in a clear, powerful and effective way. The post-event conversations are still taking place..." Jeremy Gudauskas; Director of Ministry and Service; North Central College, Naperville, IL

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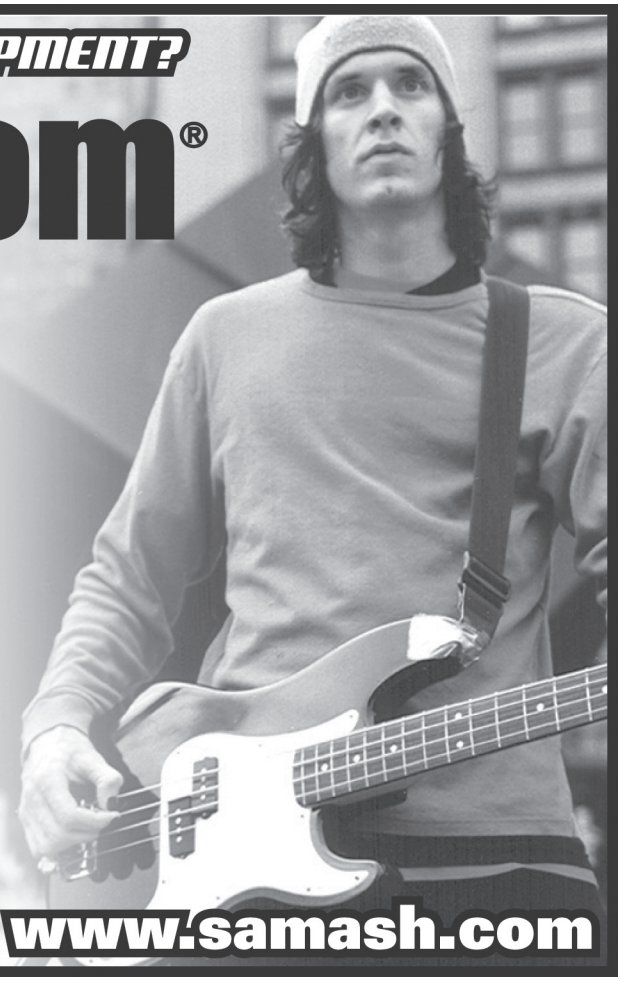

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Entertainment reviews
DVDS, BOOKS & GEAR

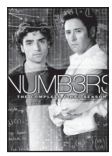
01 THE BOONDOCK SAINTS
FOX VIDEO

Someone taking the concept of vigilante-ism and exploring it to an extreme – in graphic, gory, and intense detail – is what Writer/Director Troy Duffy did with this now cult classic. What would happen if people believed they were called by God to rid the world of evil? And if they did this "ridding" with guns and multiple killings? Two Irish brothers, Connor & Murphy MacManus start taking out Mafia, drug dealers, and other hoodlums in downtown Boston, reciting the following prayer:

"And Shepherds we shall be. For Thee, my Lord, for Thee. Power hath descended forth from Thy hand, that our feet may swiftly carry out Thy command. So we shall flow a river forth to Thee and teeming with souls shall it ever be. In Nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti."

The local public surprisingly doesn't call for their heads, but instead applauds their "cleaning up" efforts. Even the lead FBI agent, Paul Smecker (Willem DaFoe) becomes enamored with their sense of immediate justice. It's fascinating to explore the concept to this radical and logical conclusion. As the brothers pursue "Veritas" (truth) and "Aequitas" (justice), it might remind the viewers among us of the better choice for God's mercy than His justice, which we're all deserving of. *DV*

02 CRASH *LIONSGATE*
Shoving latent racism in the viewer's face without preaching was an amazing accomplishment by Director Paul Haggis, who afflicted the comfortable in all of us with this layered series of inter-woven vignettes that collide over 36 intense hours in Los Angeles. *DV*



03 NUMBER3 *PARAMOUNT*
Boiling down each episode's whodunit with mathematics is actually almost as fascinating as the micro-evidence explained in *CSI*, which is also couched in amazing crime action. The interviews and commentaries shed even more light on this real-life application to police work. Math was never so addicting. *DV*

04 GAME 6 *HART SHARP*
It's good to see Michael Keaton back in this dark tale involving a mysterious and negatively hyped Broadway critic (played by Robert Downey Jr) juxtaposed with the ever paranoid playwright (Keaton) and his big night, all wrapped around the Red Sox famous '86 World Series collapse. Fun. *DV*

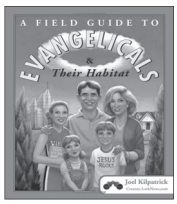
05 BIG MAMA'S HOUSE 2 *FOX VIDEO*
Martin Short puts in a surprisingly funny performance as Big Momma returns for more clandestine FBI action, marital conflict, romantic tension, and plenty of family moral lessons. The expected sight gags and old lady caricatures are worthy of repeated viewings and laughs. *DV*

06 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2 *FOX VIDEO*
The Summer camp setting here doesn't offer enough new ground to take this one beyond its prequel, but the sibling rivalry and everyday family still provide a few laughs. The extra disc full of goodies somehow doesn't seem warranted, although the extra background on the characters and talent is fun. *DV*

07 THE SECOND CHANCE *SONY*
Let's be honest. Sometimes Christian themed movies tend to be a bit cheesy. Thankfully, Michael W. Smith's character dives deep into church politics and the needs of an inner city neighborhood with a performance that won't clog your arteries. *Kelly Benson*

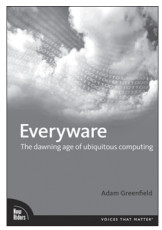
08 BUTCH CASSIDY & THE SUNDANCE KID *FOX VIDEO*
Ah, this is a definite classic. It has been remastered and redone to better quality, and is a movie that has more music in scenes than dialogue. Reissued as the *Ultimate Collector's Edition*, there are plenty of extras that seem a bit over saturated with making-ofs and documentaries. *Rand Renfrow*

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCY (%)	100	30	20	20	10	10	100	40
OBSCENITIES	287	105	6	10		1	4	3
SCENES OF GORE	8		5					
NUDITY / SEXUALITY	1	3		1				3



A Field Guide to Evangelicals & Their Habitat
Joel Kilpatrick – Harper SF/Harper Collins

Joel Kilpatrick's satirical LarkNews.com site has consistently delivered guffaws galore poking fun at Christianity. *A Field Guide To Evangelicals & Their Habitat* extends the brand (a slew of Lark News clips herein) and concept with a quasi-anthropological approach to the vagaries of Caucasian churchfolk. With chapters exploring how one identifies and hangs out with the group in question, it's often hilarious – and painfully accurate – per the peculiarities of sorta' sanctified subculture Kilpatrick explores. Later chapters addressing evangies' mating habits and educational preferences, however, find Kilpatrick's commentary noticeably more caustic and relying on stereotypes; which, if at all true, are sadly more unfortunate. Not necessarily advisable to give to the unconverted, this *Guide* will nevertheless provide knowing chuckles for those already in the flock...before the author's bitterness gets a little bit better of him. *Jamie Lee Rake*



Everyware: The Dawning of Ubiquitous Computing
Adam Greenfield – AIGA/New Riders

The geeks who have made computers an unaviodable and nigh omnipresent facet of modern life may have inherited the earth for the time being, but they want more. As Adam Greenfield explores in over 80 essays of varying lengths in *Everyware*, the time of keyboard and mouse may soon be over, and computing will be so entwined in our existence as to appear invisibly pervasive. Greenfield intelligently measures alarm with hopefulness while admitting that the 267 pages he's written about the prospects of ambient computing only begin to open the discussion about what increasingly is to be an inevitability. Though the Zen Buddhism he has adopted appears to have had minimal major consideration in his thorough (for beginners, surely) discussion, an unabashed Christian viewpoint of the same topic could likewise prove useful (there's the matter of computers' omnipresence, for starters). If no such book by from that perspective exists, Greenfield piques the curiosity and speculative facilities of whomever's reading his reasoning all the same. *Jamie Lee Rake*

01

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(01) The **iMic II USB Audio Adapter** ($39) with optional **Turntable Grounding Cable** ($12) allows easy recording/digitizing of vinyl to mp3. (02) The **iFM Radio and Remote** ($39) turns your iPod into a radio, and this thing acts as a small remote control and memo/sound recorder. (03) **EarJams** ($19) come in 3 sizes and clip onto the iPod EarBuds, allowing for a better fit and a little deeper bass. (04) **EarThumps** ($19) adjust to fit 3 sizes of ear and offer a snugger fit and boomier bass. (05) **MX 55V Street** ($39) headphones finally show some advancement in ear fitting, with extra snug-ness and stability due to its secondary stabilizing (soft rubber) pad that fits into the upper, outer ear. It'll stay in for a good jog/ride/game, but expect a rude awakening if/when they get snagged and ripped out of your ears! (06) **OMX 52 Street** ($39) 'phones are supremely comfortable and will stay on during a vigourous workout, but won't block out the noise of a lawnmower, for example; which also makes it ideal for situations where you still want to hear your surroundings. *DV*

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The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art

America and most of the Western world of the early twenty-first century A.D. embody cultures largely driven by the quest for self-fulfillment, affluence, and pleasure (as opposed to things like survival or self-consciously transcendent goals such as serving God's Will as a society). American society (which influences much of the rest of the world) is largely a cultural product of the secularization of a logical extension of Evangelicalism (a succinct and informative account of this can be found in Michael Horton's excellent book, *Made In America*). The quest for pleasure in America is largely expressed by seeking entertainment through the experience of the Arts, through the varied mediums such as television, film, popular music, fashion, home decoration, sports (oh yes, Virginia, sports in modern America are also an entertainment art), and so forth.

Scattered throughout America, many millions strong (some demographers estimate between a fifth and a fourth of the population), is the Evangelical wing of the Church, which is comprised not only of the explicitly Evangelical denominations (such as the Baptists, Evangelical Free Churches, and Assemblies of God), but also of millions of other believing Evangelicals who are members of the so-called "mainstream" denominations, as well (such as the Methodists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians).

Evangelicals, despite their varied denominational status, are united in their belief that a personal encounter with Christ, Who has died for the sins of mankind, is necessary to salvation, and that this encounter will change the individual who experiences such an encounter, enabling him to be obedient to God's Will, especially as His Will is revealed through the writings in the Bible, God's Written Revelation.

We Evangelicals (and I am an Evangelical) believe that the Gospel message can change the world (as it is doing today in Africa, South America, and Asia). Not terribly long ago, historically speaking, it changed the West. Yet today the West self-consciously is moving farther and farther from the Biblical concepts which ruled the formation of our culture for centuries. How can this be, in a society riddled with millions of Evangelicals who profess to hold to a message which is life- and world-changing? Why the pagan-ward drift?

More to the point of this article is a related question, an important one for Evangelicals in a society which is moving away from its Christian heritage while idolizing art and beauty: Why, considering the large number of Evangelicals in America, is so little good art being produced by them? Why is most Evangelical-produced art so shoddy?

I recognize that there is some mature, excellent, effective, world-class art coming out of our branch of the Church (in fact, it appears to me that the production of good art by Evangelicals is growing); nonetheless, in comparison with the huge number of extant Evangelicals, the amount of truly well-done art, percentage-wise, is comparatively very low. Why is this?

Evangelicals profess to know and love the Creator-God of all beauty, the Triune God Who is Himself Beauty; how then can so much of our art not reflect this deeply and realistically?

This is a question with a very complex answer, and, Lord willing, we will examine some of the answers to this question in issues to come. At the core of this question, though, is the issue of our knowledge and understanding of Scripture. Evangelicals believe that the Bible is God's Written Word, inspired by God's Own Spirit (2 Peter 2:19-21), given to light our way (Psalm 119:105), and to equip the believer for "every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17), which would include the art produced by those Christians called to be artists.

Scripture is Revelation from God Himself, providing a lens to correct our sin-distorted vision, and a map to allow us to negotiate Reality as God wants us to. The Bible tells us what life is, as directed by the One Who made and sustains life, the only One Who sees clearly the Reality He has made in all its facets.

Most Evangelicals own at least one Bible (many have several). Yet most Evangelicals neither know nor understand their Scriptures, which drastically effects their ability to produce meaningful, deep art. Why don't most Evangelicals know their Bibles? There are two basic reasons: laziness and bad theology. To these, Lord willing, we turn next issue.

[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it
Chris Wighaman

I don't watch a ton of TV,

but by the time I get around to it tends to be only after 9pm. Which leaves me with a huge selection of *CSI: Mishawaka*, *Law & Order: Small Claims Court*, and a Brit show from 1964 over on PBS [as you can tell I do not have cable]. Well, last night I discovered that I have another channel hidden between all the Christian stations that I tend to skim over as fast as humanly possible. It was UPN and of course it added to the selection of quality programming by providing a rerun of *Dr. Phil*. I had never seen the show before, and to be honest it was awful and made my stomach turn. It chronicled the life of a married couple who had reached their end and didn't know what to do. The way they spoke to each other was profane, selfish, degrading and sick. After a half an hour of them belittling each other while claiming to want to save their marriage, Dr. Phil let them know what they needed to do. In his unique Southern accent he said:

"Bill, whyen yew wake up in the mornin' yew neeed to mayke it your number one gohal tew dew everything yew can tew mayke your wiyfe feeel loved."

I sat there knowing this couple wouldn't make it out of the parking lot without melting down into another fight, but pondering the truth of what Dr. Phil had to say [ugh, I can't believe I'm quoting Dr. Phil]. Our culture is driven by selfishness, and the idea of putting someone else's needs ahead of your own is almost foreign to us. However, it was one of the core messages of Christ. Look at John 13 after Jesus had washed his disciples' feet: "Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." Lowing yourself to the place of servant is the example Jesus set and fully expected His followers to actually do it. It's not simply the "attitude of a servant," which is a phrase people like to throw around so they don't actually have to participate in anything. It is the intentional lowering of yourself to the place of servant to the point that when you "wake up in the mornin' yew mayke it your nuhmber one gohal tew dew everything yew can tew mayke peepol around yew feeel loved." What does that look like today for you in your life?

Devotions with Greg Tucker

"Denny's & the Art of Discipline"

I'm typing this from a Denny's restaurant down the street from Disneyland. It's 2:30 in the morning, and while I sense most people here are finishing the day, mine is just beginning. I'm a natural early-riser, but when my alarm went off at 1:30 even I had to admit it was a ridiculous time to wake up. But I'm here with my Bible open, because I have so much to do that I dare not sleep in or neglect my time in the Word.

Are you impressed? Don't be. I am alternately the King of Discipline and the King of No Discipline, and that last one isn't because I don't know better. Sometimes I just lose focus on how important it is to stay up on the little things. That's what I mean by discipline.

While in Washington DC recently, I saw a unique brand of discipline. It was at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where a guard stands watch every minute of every day. Even in sub-freezing weather a member of the nation's most celebrated military team can be found at that post, slowly walking 21 steps, then turning with a snap, time and time again. They make it look easy, but what's really impressive is the part you don't see.

- For the first six months of duty a guard cannot talk to anyone or watch TV, and all off-duty time is spent studying the 175 notable people laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery.
- Every guard spends five hours a day getting his uniform ready for duty.
- He must commit 2 years of life to protecting the tomb, and live in a barrack under the tomb.
- He cannot drink any alcohol (on or off duty) or swear in public for the rest of his life.

With those kinds of commitments made in private, it's no wonder what they do in public appears easy! But that's always true, isn't it? People are better or worse because of the choices they make when no one is looking.

Most HM readers have two things in common – we love God and we love music – and to be successful at either requires self-discipline. Musically it may mean practicing awhile longer when everyone else wants to play Xbox. Spiritually, sometimes it's waking up a little earlier so we can spend time in the Word. Good or bad, the little things add up in a big way.

Every great accomplishment, fueled by passion, will be carried out because of discipline. It's discipline that turns a doodler into an artist; discipline that turns an average guitar-player into a dynamic musician; discipline that makes a successful author out of a simple writer. And it's discipline that will turn a spiritual weakling into a dynamic, Spirit-filled saint called you.

See you at Denny's.

[Greg Tucker lives in your computer at HopeCCA.com]

PICK OF THE LITTER

Venus Hum

Venus Hum is the kind of band that has a DIY-pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps attitude about music and art. Creating intricate electro-pop since 1999, the band recently emerged from a three-year hiatus with the full length, *The Colors In The Wheel*. The time off allowed the trio to work on solo projects, figure out what they wanted from the band, and for singer Annette Strean's healed damaged vocal nodes. Strean's Imogene Heap meets Fleming and John hybrid vocals uphold electronic beats made from Wurlitzers, computers and vibraphones. In an attempt to use only one instrument on the album's opener, "Turn Me Around," Venus Hum found innovative ways to manipulate an acoustic guitar to sound like several different instruments. Creative ingenuity is carried throughout everything this band does, including the bulbous headed characters created by designer/sculptor Mark Sloniker that have showed up in previously recorded EP jacket covers and videos. With an artistic edge and a desire to stretch musical limitations, Venus Hum offers a layered sound that promises greatness. (Kelly Benson)
venushum.com

Back When

Hailing from the same state that brought you Bright Eyes and The Faint, Nebraska band Back When (Init Records) brings some noise to the Heartland. Their instrument-driven calculated chaos is an intelligent break from the usual hardcore band. Quiet interludes break up powerful vocals and gritty guitars to create songs with substance. (KB)
thebackwhencollective.com

Johnmark McMillan

A patriotic sound that incorporates bold stripped down blues with a voice reminiscent of Pete Yorn and a broken America. (KB)
thejohnmark.com

Sivan

Leaving hardcore breakdowns at home, Sivan dares you to get out of the pit and put your dance pants on. Synth snippets interrupt sassy vocals, persistent drumming and gritty guitars for a sound that rivals the site of their intense performances. Cornerstone Festival attendees had plenty of chances to see Sivan in action as they played two generator shows a day for the entire week. (KB)
sivanmusic.net

The American Black Lung

The American Black Lung takes root in rock and roll while feeding on punk influences, which gives life to a loud guitar driven force with a down home feel. (KB)
theablband.com

My Epic

Sweeping harmonies and emotion-filled lyrics weave in and out of beautiful melodies created by ringing guitars that reference instrumental bands like Explosions in the Sky. Fans of As Cities Burn and Thursday will feel at home with My Epic. (KB)
myepic.net

Luminate

It's impossible not to get that feel good feeling when listening to Texas' Luminate. This six-member outfit successfully plays toe tappin', head boppin' Indie-rock with catchy guitar hooks and vocal harmonies. Their three-song self-titled album is just a sample of what's to come. (KB)
luminaterock.com

End Of Destiny

End of Destiny plays a different breed of metal, as they have their high hat louder than their double bass kicks on their recordings. Unlike As I Lay Dying or Norma Jean, bands that stretch out words as they scream them, the lead vocalist for EOD growls over lyrics rapidly. They also have some cool instrumentals with a guy talking in the background, and synth beats going on, although that kind of gets repetitive. (Rand Renfrow)
myspace.com/endofdestinymusic

The Blinking Project

There is a quote on The Blinking Project's EP which says, "Define art. Neither can I. From what I can see, one needs music to draw nearer to anything, especially definition. I seek to define." After reading that quote I thought, 'How do I define this band?' Similar to Atom and his Package, without all the silliness, The Blinking Project's foundation is that drum machine electronic sound with moving lyrics that also tend to move your feet. (KB)
theblinkingproject.com

Full Blown Zero

Cool, System of a Down vibe. Furious and creative. (Doug Van Pelt)
fullblownzero.com

Despite The Loss

Total mewithoutYou clones. Potential outweighs production. (DV)
myspace.com/despiteloss

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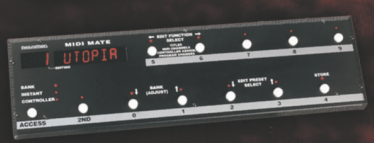

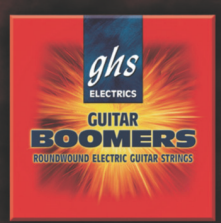

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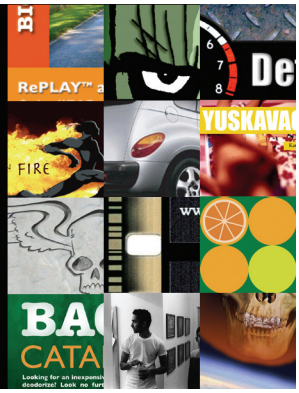

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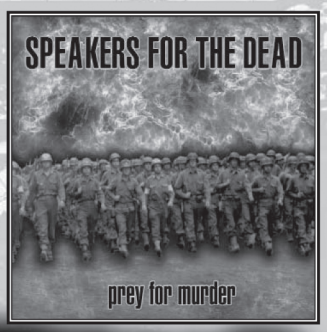

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Is it not a strange thing that, with the shadow of atomic destruction hanging over the world and with the coming of Christ drawing near, the professed followers of the Lord should be giving themselves up to religious amusements? That in an hour when mature saints are so desperately needed vast numbers of believers should revert to spiritual childhood and clamor for religious toys?

A. W. TOZER